

As stewards of the public trust with more than 350 combined years of service to northeast Ohio, the Akron Art Museum, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Cleveland Museum of Art, MOCA Cleveland, and Transformer Station nurture artistic creativity and ignite imaginations, while simultaneously generating jobs and fostering tourism in our region. As leaders of these institutions, we join the growing chorus of Americans voicing our dismay at the proposal to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Throughout history, our nation and local communities have placed great value on the arts as a showcase for creativity and cultural expression, as well as a driver of education, thoughtful discourse, and innovation. Eliminating national support for the arts would be a purely symbolic gesture: the combined budgets of the NEA and NEH cost each American less than one dollar per year. It would be detrimental not only because of the impact it would have on cherished organizations and the vital services they provide, but also in terms of lost jobs, reduced tourism, and the elimination of popular cultural amenities. It would diminish access to arts education, depriving future generations of exposure to differing perspectives and new ideas, and it would mean less civic engagement, as well as less regional, national, and international cultural exchange.

Although no arts organization in the United States can afford to rely solely on federal funding to fulfill its mission, the benefits of such funds are crucial to creating and maintaining vibrant communities. NEA, NEH, and IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) support produces an ever-widening ripple effect: each year the NEA allocates more than 40 percent of its grant funds to state and regional arts organizations, such as the Ohio Arts Council, which redistribute those funds as much-needed operating and project support to hundreds of local organizations, both large and small, to cultivate unique regional programming, public art installations, museum exhibitions, and more. Some of these funds make it possible for notable and beloved artworks from around the globe to travel here, exposing viewers to works they may never otherwise see. It also makes possible cultural exchanges with other countries--trading artists, ideas, and new approaches to art and art making.

Our mission of service to broad and diverse audiences is no less relevant today than when our five institutions were founded. We, along with museums and arts organizations across the country, share the belief that access to the arts is at the core of an enlightened and equitable society. During this moment of heightened national discord, extinguishing such vital funding for the arts and humanities is not a cut that our country can afford.

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