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Americans for the Arts  
Testimony Before the U.S. House of Representatives  
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee  
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Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of federal funding for the **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at no less than \$167.5 million for FY 2020**, a \$12.5 million increase over FY 2019 funding.

Americans for the Arts is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. We have more than 55 years of service and are dedicated to representing and serving the more than 5,000 local arts agencies in every state. Together we work to ensure that every American has access to the transformative power of the arts. I appreciate the opportunity to provide public comment on the budget request for the NEA.

While we have yet to receive the Trump administration's FY 2020 budget request, I was deeply troubled by the Administration's short-sightedness for the proposed FY 2018 and FY 2019 budgets calling for the elimination of the NEA. **I commend the bipartisan work from this committee**, and Congress, in rejecting those requests, and I know that I speak for the arts community in our appreciation to Congress in appropriating an additional \$2 million in funds for the NEA in FY 2019 over FY 2018.

Receiving consecutive years of incremental funding increases, the NEA's investment in every congressional district in the country now contributes to a \$764 billion arts and culture industry in America according to our U.S. Department of Commerce, representing 4.2 percent of the annual GDP. The nation's arts and culture industry supports 4.9 million jobs and yields a \$21 billion trade surplus for our country.<sup>1</sup>

Further, every NEA grant dollar leverages at least \$9 in private and other public funds, generating more than \$500 million in matching support. This leveraging power far surpasses the required non-federal match of at least 1:1 and illustrates why federal support for the arts is uniquely valuable. The federal investment in the arts helps power the creative economy across the country.

Proportionally, the NEA's budget is just 0.004 percent of the federal budget. That amounts to 47 cents per capita. In fact, the NEA budget has been losing its share of federal discretionary spending and failing to keep pace with inflation since 1992 when the appropriation was for \$176

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, <https://www.bea.gov/system/files/2018-03/acpsa0318.pdf>.

million. When adjusted for inflation, the NEA's 1992 budget would today be more than *twice* the current budget.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding our request for FY 2020, we hope that the NEA will receive funding at the same level as the recent high point of \$167.5 million, which Congress appropriated on a bipartisan basis in FY 2010.

We estimate that a \$12.5 million increase, based on current NEA programming would provide:

- An increase in the **total amount** for direct endowment grants by about **\$6 million**.
- An increase in the **total number** of direct grants by about **210**.
- An increase of \$4 million to the NEA's state partnership agreement, which would result in about **2,000 additional state grants**.
- With the NEA estimation of a 9:1 return for each direct grant dollar, an 8% funding level increase would be expected to leverage an additional **\$40 million in non-federal matching support**.

NEA grants are remarkably far-reaching, and they touch many communities which have fewer opportunities to experience the arts. According to the NEA, the majority of direct grants go to small- and medium-sized organizations, which often support projects for audiences that otherwise might not have access to arts programming. In FY 2017:

- Small-sized organizations (less than \$500,000 in prior year expenditures) received 31% of the NEA's direct grants;
- Medium-sized organizations (\$500,000 to \$2 million in prior year expenditures) received about 34%; and
- Large organizations (over \$2 million) received 35% of direct grant awards.

In examining the communities that NEA grants touch, it is important to note that:

- 40% of NEA-supported activities take place in high-poverty neighborhoods;
- 36% of NEA grants go to organizations that reach underserved populations such as people with disabilities, people in institutions, and veterans; and
- 33% of NEA grants serve low-income audiences.<sup>3</sup>

I'd like to highlight one very important NEA initiative—that of the **Creative Forces program**. An increase in funding for the NEA is vital in order to sustain and expand important work that serves the needs of military service members and veterans who have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and psychological health conditions. Much of this work is being supported through targeted programs such as the NEA's Creative Forces Military Healing Arts Network (administered through a cooperative agreement with Americans for the Arts), as well as community arts engagement programs receiving federal grants and state and local arts agencies. The modest investment in government funding for arts and health in the military is instrumental

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<sup>2</sup> Americans for the Arts,

[https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/1.%20National%20Endowment%20for%20the%20Arts\\_0.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/1.%20National%20Endowment%20for%20the%20Arts_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Endowment for the Arts, [https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA\\_Quick\\_Facts\\_2018\\_V.1.pdf](https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA_Quick_Facts_2018_V.1.pdf).

in allowing military service members and veterans to heal and successfully reintegrate into society and their communities, as well as supporting military families and caregivers in their pathway to health and well-being.

The Creative Forces program—currently at 11 clinical sites—utilizes 14 NEA-funded and four DoD/VA-funded creative arts therapists (CATs), who are integrated into interdisciplinary treatment teams providing art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, and creative writing instruction for service members with TBI and associated psychological health issues. **In 2018, more than 16,000 patient encounters took place, and over 3,000 new patients were served.** Additionally, the program significantly invests in related research, with 11 new studies underway and nine already published.

Many of the creative arts therapies and community arts engagement programs that are making a difference in the lives of our military service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers are being documented and networked through Americans for the Arts’ National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military. Several examples here are administered and take place in your districts:

- The **Ars Bellum Foundation in St. Paul, MN**, is a non-profit organization that provides research-based art therapy programs for veterans and their families experiencing PTSD and related mental health conditions as a result of trauma from their service;
- The **Vet Art Project in Akron, OH**, creates opportunities for veterans and family members to work with creative media to foster storytelling about war and service to attain a greater level of personal understanding, awareness, and peace. Programs include workshop series with expressive arts therapists for women veterans and women who support veterans and service members, male veterans, young adults from military families, and civilians who are interested in building bridges and assisting members of the veteran community;
- The **Museum of Glass in Tacoma, WA**, runs a program called “Hot Shop Heroes: Healing with Fire,” offering glassblowing and flame-working classes to service members with complex and devastating physical and mental injuries; and
- The **Reno Veterans Photo Group in Reno, NV**—with a mission is to improve the quality of life for veterans through the healing power of the arts—provides training in photography techniques, lighting, post processing, printing, and framing.

Continuing and expanding creative arts therapies and community arts engagement programs is essential to reaching military veterans with TBI and post-traumatic stress. For example, 85% of military patients say art therapy is helpful to their healing and military patients consistently rate art therapy among the top four treatments out of more than 40 health interventions offered.

This work is vital for active duty military, staff, veterans, their families, and caregivers across the military, public, private, and nonprofit sectors. It will advance the policy, practice, and quality use of arts and creativity as tools for health in the military, better ensuring the readiness, resilience, and retention, while assisting the eventual reintegration from military to civilian life.

In sum, federal funding fosters investment, spurs job-related growth, expands educational opportunities, helps our country, and provides for the preservation of our heritage.

Thank you for your consideration and support of at least \$167.5 million for the NEA in the FY 2020 budget, and, as always, we stand ready to assist and remain focused on getting the Endowments fully funded again in the coming months.