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PREPARED STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
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Good afternoon Chair Pingree, Ranking Member Joyce and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

I am grateful for your leadership and support for the arts in your communities and throughout the country. After serving on the National Council on the Arts for nearly 10 years, it is an honor to now serve as the Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and to be here today to discuss President Biden's Fiscal 2023 Budget Request of \$203.55 million for the NEA. I look forward to working with all of you in the near future.

Before I review details of the budget request, I'd like to share a little about my personal story and why I am honored to serve as leader of the Arts Endowment at this unique time. My commitment to the arts began at home. My father, who retired from the U.S. Postal Service, and my mother, who worked for Los Angeles Unified School District, looked to the arts to teach my brother and me about the richness of our cultures. They wanted us to be proud and curious about our own stories and the histories, struggles, and aspirations of other people. They wanted us to be aware of our similarities, our differences, and our shared humanity. They also wanted us to understand the power of creativity, imagination, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit. Those same values have been foundational throughout my career.

With all of the challenges facing the American people at this time, the work of the NEA and support for the arts in all communities are now more important than ever. In addition to

serving as an economic engine, arts and creativity are essential to improving our children's education and to the wellbeing and health of our nation. For these reasons, advancing equity in and access to the arts is critically important.

The NEA is a grantmaker but it is also a collaborator, convener, connector and catalyst—a national resource. Forty percent of all NEA grantmaking dollars are distributed through the Regional Arts Organizations and State Arts Agencies. These allocations create multiple opportunities for organizations to apply for federal funds in ways that maximize access to all kinds and sizes of organizations.

The NEA is a small but mighty federal agency. All 435 congressional districts benefit annually from NEA awards. But in order to respond to the continued tremendous need throughout the arts sector, we must do more. This budget will increase investments in grant programs and initiatives that have a direct and tangible benefit in communities; greater ability to engage with organizations regardless of size or zip code; and additional strategies that promote the health and wellbeing of all people.

I want to work with each of you to ensure your constituents have access to all that the Arts Endowment has to offer. Whether in rural areas or urban centers, all Americans should have the ability to participate in the arts as well as to make, teach and engage with the arts—in other words, to lead artful lives and reach their full potential.

Serving as an Economic Engine

As you know, the arts serve as an economic engine in your communities and throughout the country. In a March 2022 study conducted by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, in

partnership with the NEA, arts and cultural economic activity accounted for 4.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), or \$876.7 billion, in 2020.¹ I am sure it will not surprise you to learn that arts presenters and the performing arts saw some of the steepest declines in production across the entire economy in 2020.² After adjusting for inflation, the value added by performing arts presenters—that is, performance venues, including festivals—fell by 73 percent between 2019 and 2020.³ Over the same period, the value added by performing arts organizations—such as music, dance, and theater groups—fell by 51 percent.⁴ More than 600,000 salaried workers left the arts and cultural sector—or were forced out.⁵ We’re talking about workers in arts education, museum workers, artists, writers, performers, and many others kinds of behind-the-scenes personnel. Many more self-employed artists and business owners in the cultural field suffered hard financial hits as well. It is clear from this snapshot alone that while the arts have great power to fuel our economy, because of continued uncertainty the sector requires significant support.

COVID Response

As you know, in response to the pandemic, the NEA received CARES Act funding of \$75 million and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding of \$135 million. As part of the American Rescue Plan, the NEA distributed \$52 million to the six Regional Arts Organizations (RAOs) and 56 State Arts Agencies (SAAs) and Jurisdictional Arts Agencies for sub-granting. The NEA also awarded \$20.2 million to 66 local arts agencies in 38 states for subgranting. And lastly, the

¹ National Endowment for the Arts, *The U.S. Arts Economy in 2020: A National Summary Report*, March 2022. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/NationalReportCompliantMarch11.pdf>

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

Arts Endowment approved grants totaling \$57.95 million to 569 arts organizations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and District of Columbia. This approach allowed for significant investments in entities with the greatest proximity to and familiarity with the needs of the arts sector at state and local levels across the country.

Also, in early 2021, in response to impacts of the pandemic, the NEA's Office of Research & Analysis identified common practices among arts groups across the nation that had successfully reopened their doors to the public.⁶ In addition to this research, the NEA held a successful webinar to share the findings and to promote the exchange of new ideas and common experiences. Now, in keeping with a new five-year research agenda, we will continue to support studies and the development of evidence-based tools for the sector as it confronts post-pandemic realities and other current and emerging challenges.⁷

FY2023 Budget

The President's FY 2023 budget request of \$203.55 million builds upon past investments in the arts and recognizes the NEA's critical role in supporting American communities. This Budget will help us better address the vulnerabilities in the arts field revealed in the last few years. Historically, 40 percent of the NEA's grantmaking funds are allocated to State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations. Consistent with this practice, this Budget provides \$64 million to these groups. The Budget includes funding for grant programs such as Grants for Arts Projects (which includes programs in 15 disciplines from dance and theater to visual arts and design), Challenge America (an entry point for new and/or small organizations) and Our

⁶ National Endowment for the Arts, *The Art of Reopening: A Guide to Current Practices Among Arts Organizations During COVID-19*, January 2021. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/The%20Art-of-Reopening.pdf>

⁷ National Endowment for the Arts, *Research Agenda*, December 2021. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA-research-agenda-12.21.pdf>

Town (the intersection of arts, culture, and design to strengthen communities) providing needed resources to local arts communities.

By statute, the NEA provides direct funding to individuals only through literature fellowships, Jazz Masters, and the National Heritage Fellowships. The NEA supports creative opportunities for young people through programs such as Poetry Out Loud, a national poetry recitation competition, and the Musical Theatre Songwriting Challenge, helping students to turn their musical visions into fully-realized songs ready for the stage. While creating unique, impactful artistic experiences, these programs also contribute to building confidence and life skills that help propel our young people in myriad ways that benefit us all.⁸ The Mayors' Institute on City Design and the Citizen's Institute on Rural Design assist those in urban and rural areas to engage in design methods to address pressing community concerns and challenges—helping leaders and public servants to do their strongest, smartest and most impactful work.

To fulfill the Arts Endowment's mission, the Budget also funds new critical full-time positions including a Chief Diversity Officer position and additional staff for advancements in community engagement strategies and application management to support a larger and growing applicant pool that is more diverse by every measure.

Improving Our Children's Education and Wellbeing and Health of Our Nation

I have alluded mostly to the significant economic impact of the arts sector. I would now like to turn your attention to some other benefits that are at the core of NEA's mission. The NEA's Arts Education funding focuses on increasing knowledge and skills in the arts to help

⁸ National Endowment for the Arts, *Line by Line: Transforming Student Lives and Learning with the Art of Poetry*, May 2020. <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/publications/line-line-transforming-student-lives-and-learning-art-poetry>

students reach their full potential. This grant program is focused on pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade students, the educators who support them, and the schools, communities and ecosystems that serve them. By supporting dance, music, theater, visual arts, literary arts, media arts and design education for all students, we help to close the opportunity gap for students who have the least access to the arts.

Much research suggests that students from low economic backgrounds, as well as students of color, are more likely to attend schools without quality arts education programs.⁹ NEA-supported arts education programs play a significant role in equalizing educational opportunities. There is also evidence of how arts education programs support social and emotional learning needs of students and have positive impacts on the wellness of young people.¹⁰

One of the many things that I am especially excited about is the growing body of work that the Arts Endowment is advancing at the intersection of arts and health. The NEA is constantly gathering and sharing evidence of what works. For example, NEA Research Labs are exploring the arts' ability to treat chronic pain, to improve longitudinal health outcomes in the general population, to help delay cognitive decline among older adults, and to foster social and emotional development in early childhood. The Arts Endowment is partnering with the National Institutes of Health to promote rigorous research about music and health, and we have established the Sound Health Network, a national resource center to share this knowledge more widely and to connect neuroscientists and health practitioners with musicians and music therapists.

⁹ American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *The Case for Arts Education*, 2021. <https://www.amacad.org/publication/case-for-arts-education/section/2>.

¹⁰ National Endowment for the Arts, *The Arts in Early Childhood: Social and Emotional Benefits of Arts Participation*, December 2015. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/arts-in-early-childhood-dec2015-rev.pdf>

It also includes our work with Creative Forces, the NEA's military healing arts network which, as you may know, is an initiative of the Arts Endowment in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. Focused on military and veteran populations exposed to trauma, as well as their families and caregivers, the program places creative arts therapies at the core of patient-centered care at clinical sites throughout the country, including telehealth services, and increases access to community arts activities to promote health, wellness, and quality of life.

This network of in-person and virtual services extends support for current and former creative arts therapies' patients and their families as they transition from treatment in a clinical setting to arts programming in their community. Creative Forces has supported research and evaluation on how creative arts therapies have helped service members deal with trauma as part of an integrated care model.

The program has expanded to include support for trauma-exposed military-connected populations in both clinical and community settings. In the future, the NEA will continue to monitor this work and assess how these successful practices can be applied to other impacted populations.

Advancing Equity and Access

Arts, culture, and design play essential roles towards more inclusive and equitable communities. This happens in countless ways ranging from building bridges among cultures and fostering mutual respect for all, to helping equip people to enter jobs and meaningful careers and creating opportunity rich communities, towns and cities.

This budget will build on already successful engagement efforts with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and tribal communities, as well as increased outreach to Hispanic

Serving Institutions. It will allow the NEA to continue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity and equal opportunity for all Americans, including veterans, people with disabilities, and those in rural and urban communities alike.

The NEA has developed an Equity Action Plan that provides a roadmap for the creation of meaningful and innovative programs and initiatives. These opportunities will increase meaningful arts participation and engagement in historically underserved communities that often have rich cultural traditions to build from and develop concrete policies and procedures for providing access accommodations for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. The NEA will also increase awareness of contract and procurement opportunities among under-represented groups. The Arts Endowment will make organizational adjustments to bolster the agency's ability to successfully implement this equity plan.

In closing, I want to extend my profound gratitude to Chair Pingree, Ranking Member Joyce and all Members of the Subcommittee for your support and for the opportunity to discuss the President's FY2023 Budget for the National Endowment for the Arts. I look forward to working with you and continuing to earn the Art's Endowment's longstanding bipartisan support.

With your leadership, this budget will ensure the arts can continue to: serve as an economic engine; improve our children's education and the wellness and health of our nation; and, advance equity and access so that all people can truly lead artful lives and reach their full potential

I am pleased to take your questions. Thank you.