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PREPARED STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
Wednesday, May 1, 2024

Good afternoon Chair Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee.

It is an honor to be with you today to discuss President Biden’s Fiscal Year 2025 Request of \$210.1 million for the National Endowment for the Arts. Thank you for your tremendous support of the agency’s mission. I am so grateful. Nearly two years ago, I testified in front of this Subcommittee via Zoom. Congressional hearings and arts participation have something in common: it’s really great to be back in-person.

I have had the privilege of serving as Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts since January 2022. As you’ve heard me say before, the NEA is a small but mighty agency. NEA staff work closely with communities both big and small – urban, suburban, and rural. NEA staff are trusted leaders in the arts sector and valued partners in communities of all kinds across the country.

The NEA has addressed barriers to federal funding and reduced the burden for those who work to make participation in the arts possible for all Americans. We have met with organizations, revised grant guidelines, enhanced technical assistance programs, and hosted convenings to better understand the needs across the country. In this time of uncertainty across the arts sector, NEA staff confronted challenges and created solutions.

It is because of the NEA staff's dedication that all 435 congressional districts benefit from NEA funding annually and, I believe, the reason the NEA enjoys such broad support. I am proud to work with such a group of truly devoted public servants.

As a whole, the arts sector continues to be a remarkable contributor to our economy. Emerging from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the most recently available Bureau of Economic Analysis data show that in 2022, the arts and cultural industries generated \$1.1 trillion to the economy and supported 5.2 million jobs – a highwater mark for the sector.¹

What I see in my travels — and what I am sure you have heard back home — tells a complex story. Large portions of the creative economy still face hardships. For example, many venues are closing and performances are being cancelled. This is true across all artistic disciplines. Data show that the performing arts economy and employment have not fully returned to pre-pandemic levels.² Artists' and arts workers' wages have faced a slow recovery.³ These professions include stage hands, workers who support technical aspects of production such as lighting and set-building, visual artists, as well as musicians, actors, and other performers.⁴

The NEA sees the demand for our grantmaking and support. Year after year, the number of applications continues to rise and interest in the NEA continues to increase.

The President's Budget meets this critical moment for the arts sector.

This Budget:

- Supports and strengthens the NEA's core funding opportunities and partnerships,

¹ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2022.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

- Bolsters the creative economy at a time of significant need,
- Expands opportunities for arts participation for all, including the foundational experience of arts education in rural, tribal, and other historically underserved communities, and
- Advances the work at the intersection of arts and health.

Research demonstrates that arts participation leads to positive outcomes.⁵ For example, the arts are shown to improve social and emotional learning among students.⁶ Arts participation benefits brain health for seniors,⁷ and helps address the invisible wounds of war for our veterans and active military.⁸ The President’s Budget reflects what a significant body of research demonstrates is true. As a society, and as individuals, we cannot reach our full potential without access to the arts and arts participation.

The Budget continues to invest in initiatives with strong bipartisan support such as Creative Forces, the NEA’s military healing arts network (a collaboration with the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs), the Arts Education Partnership (a partnership with the Department of Education), Poetry Out Loud, and Big Read. These programs are made possible with the support of regional, state, and local arts agencies, educational institutions, and leaders in all parts of the country. The Budget continues the longstanding practice of awarding forty percent of the NEA’s grantmaking dollars to the 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies

⁵ World Health Organization, *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*, 2019.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ National Institute on Aging, *Participating in the arts creates paths to healthy aging*, 2019.

⁸ Kaimal, *et. al*, *Long-term art therapy clinical interventions with military service members with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress: Findings from a mixed methods program evaluation study*, 2021.

and six regional arts organizations for regranting. If funded, in FY 2025, this amount would total more than \$65 million.

From Idaho Falls to Portland, Maine, local arts agencies offer arts programming and services in communities across the country. Local arts agencies broaden the accessibility of federal investments. The NEA provides funding to these agencies through two project types: programming and subgranting. To increase benefit for all communities and our partners, the NEA is also researching trends at the local level. This work will inform the design of projects in FY 2025 to facilitate leadership development and technical assistance in support of local arts agency reach, capacity, and impact.

We are grateful for our ongoing mutually beneficial partnerships with those at the regional, state, and local levels who have proximity to, and understanding of, communities in metropolitan and rural areas alike.

The President's Budget supports indigenous communities. Informed by indigenous artists and culture bearers, the NEA is also making additional investments to support Native arts and culture. The NEA will hire our first Director of Native Arts and Tribal Affairs to bolster our obligation and commitment to serving indigenous communities,

The NEA is developing and fortifying relationships with Minority Serving Institutions of higher education. For communities across the country, these colleges and universities are anchor organizations providing valuable educational opportunities and enriching the cultural fabric of the country. We are addressing the future of the cultural sector by promoting awareness of traditional and new career pathways and opportunities.

Through its coordination with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and their partners, the NEA shares resources and information about funding opportunities and builds capacity for successful grant applications. The NEA is also researching how HBCUs can strengthen and mobilize their arts and arts education resources and partnerships in order to meet regional workforce needs and opportunities. The research will inform how the NEA, state arts agencies, and regional arts organizations can further support HBCUs.

The NEA recognizes the importance of engagement in rural communities. For more than 30 years, the NEA has partnered with rural communities with populations of 50,000 or fewer through the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design. This program empowers rural communities – leveraging local and regional assets with expert assistance in fields ranging from architecture, design, and rural planning. Building on recent investments to expand this program in 2023 and 2024, this Budget will allow the NEA to further strengthen its connections to rural America and support local leaders in doing their best work.

The NEA is finding new ways to help ensure longstanding NEA programs have greater benefit in rural communities. Since 2003, the Shakespeare in American Communities program has inspired students throughout the nation with live performances. More recently, the NEA has supported touring programs to expand the initiative's geographic reach, benefitting rural communities and students, in particular. To understand how this program can best serve the public, the NEA had conversations with stakeholders across the country, including with the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. This led to further prioritizing support in rural areas including resources for future leaders through *Next Gen* apprenticeships for theater administrators and technicians.

The President's Budget supports ArtsHERE, a partnership-based national initiative launched in FY 2024. This program will expand access to arts programs and services for those whose access to the arts is limited relative to geography, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability. As part of ArtsHERE, the NEA will examine how grantees approach their work and what they need to succeed. This will inform how the NEA and other funders can best support organizations in all communities.

The NEA also serves the arts sector by drawing on federal data sources. This work fills a critical gap in helping us better understand the ways in which arts and culture impact our economy and all facets of our society. Research Grants and NEA Research Labs support the design of studies addressing priority research topics. In turn, the NEA applies findings to improve the agency's work to reflect the unique needs and realities in all communities.

The NEA is also strengthening its work at the intersection of arts and health. With your longstanding support, the NEA is proud of its record supporting servicemembers, veterans, and military-connected populations. As we continue to expand the reach of the Creative Forces program into communities across the country, the NEA is investing in growing an already robust body of research on the essential function of the arts to our health and wellbeing. The Budget increases grant opportunities for the integration of the arts with strategies promoting the health and wellbeing of people in all communities through the NEA's core grant programs.

Additionally, the President's Budget will support a new initiative focused on healing through the arts in general, with a particular emphasis on addressing mental health challenges and supporting communities recovering from trauma and disaster. This initiative will be informed by the Interagency Working Group on Arts, Health, and Civic Infrastructure, a collaboration between the NEA and the Department of Health and Human Services, and will

support new projects and partnerships at the federal, state and local levels that advance the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals. This work will create new opportunities for artists and arts workers in which they are trained and fairly compensated for contributing to our public health and civic infrastructure at a national scale.

In closing, I again extend my sincere gratitude to Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and all Members of the Subcommittee.

With your support, this Budget will enable the NEA to bolster the creative economy at a time of significant need, expand opportunities for arts participation in all communities, and foster healing through the arts across the country.

Thank for your time. I am happy to take your questions.