

March 28, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Protecting the Institute of Museum and Library Services

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the undersigned societies and organizations, we write to express our deep concern regarding the March 14, 2025 Executive Order targeting the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for elimination to the maximum extent of the law. We urge you to work with the Administration to ensure that Congress' long-standing and bipartisan commitment to authorizing and appropriating funds to IMLS is not undermined by potential executive actions.

IMLS plays a crucial role in supporting museums nationwide, providing funding that helps these organizations strengthen their public outreach programs and capacity to improve the well-being of their communities. Its Office of Museum Services (OMS) awards grants to museums for preserving and digitizing collections, educational programming, professional development, and community outreach. These grants enable museums to serve as hubs of learning, cultural preservation, and economic vitality in their communities. The agency also conducts critical research, facilitates state and regional collaboration, and supports national initiatives that benefit museums. During the COVID-19 pandemic, OMS offered indispensable guidance and relief funding to museums, helping them navigate unprecedented challenges. In the natural sciences, IMLS supports not only natural history museums but also living collections, such as botanic gardens, increasing its reach and impact.

Museums are powerful economic engines, contributing over \$50 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supporting more than 726,000 American jobs, and generating \$12 billion in tax revenue. They are also a cornerstone of our nation's educational infrastructure, investing more than \$2 billion annually in education programs that benefit students of all ages. Without the support of IMLS, museums would struggle to sustain these vital contributions.

Public support for museums is resounding. According to national [polling](#) by the American Alliance of Museums, 96% of voters endorse sustained federal funding for museums, and the same percentage express approval for lawmakers who take action to support them. This overwhelming public backing underscores the importance of maintaining and strengthening IMLS funding.

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, Congress allocated \$295 million to IMLS, with \$55.5 million designated for OMS. With this funding, OMS provided 293 grants totaling \$55 million to museums and related organizations in 44 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. However, the demand for grant funding from OMS is significantly higher. In FY 2024, OMS received 1,005 grant applications requesting more than \$203 million yet could only fund 29% of these highly rated proposals. This stark gap demonstrates the urgent need for increased federal support to ensure museums can continue providing valuable services and opportunities to communities of all sizes across the United States.

Investments in IMLS and its efforts to support scientific and educational advances in science collections are in the national interest. Scientific collections contribute to improved public well-being and national economic security¹. This ongoing documentation of our nation's heritage is irreplaceable; it cannot be reconstructed or reassembled at a later date. Specimens collected decades or centuries ago are increasingly used to develop and validate models that explain how species, including viruses and parasites, have dispersed around the world, as well as how and when pathogens might infect humans. Without continued investment in IMLS, the ability to preserve and utilize these collections for research and education will be severely compromised.

We are also deeply concerned about potential indiscriminate staffing cuts at IMLS and other agencies that support museums and science. IMLS is a small but efficient agency, and arbitrary reductions in personnel will severely undermine its ability to fulfill its critical mission. It is imperative that IMLS retains the authority to manage its staffing needs to continue serving communities effectively.

We urge Congress to take decisive action to protect IMLS from harmful funding and staffing cuts. Public funding is crucial in order for museums, small and large, to fulfill their educational, cultural, and community roles, especially for smaller institutions that may struggle with private funding alone. We ask Congress to uphold its commitment to museums, demonstrated through the bipartisan reauthorization of IMLS in 2018. Preserving this vital agency is essential to maintaining the public benefits that museums provide to millions of Americans.

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. Biological Collections: Ensuring Critical Research and Education for the 21st Century. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25592>.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and stand ready to work with you to ensure that IMLS remains a strong supporter of museums across the nation.

Sincerely,

American Arachnological Society
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Malacological Society
American Museum of Natural History
American Ornithological Society
American Phytopathological Society
American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists
American Society of Mammalogists
American Society of Naturalists
American Society of Plant Taxonomists
American Society of Primatologists
Association of Ecosystem Research Centers
Association of Science and Technology Centers
Bell Museum
Biodiversity Institute & Natural History Museum, University of Kansas
Botanical Society of America
Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences
Burke Museum Herbarium at the University of Washington
Cable Natural History Museum
California Botanical Society
Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh
Central Michigan University Herbarium
Conner Museum of Vertebrates at Washington State University
Delaware Museum of Nature and Science
Denver Botanic Gardens
Discover Life in America
Earth and Mineral Sciences Museum & Art Gallery
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Collections Network
Fort Worth Botanic Garden
Fresno State Herbarium
Friesner Herbarium of Butler University
Herpetologists' League
Integrated Digitized Biocollections

LeafWorks
Michigan Botanical Society, Huron Valley Chapter
Milwaukee Public Museum
Museologica Museum Consulting
Museum of Comparative Zoology
Museum of Southwestern Biology, University of New Mexico
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, UC Berkeley
Mycological Society of America
Natural Science Collections Alliance
New York Botanical Garden
Ocean Genome Legacy Center, Northeastern University
Organization of Biological Field Stations
Paleontological Research Institution and its Museum of the Earth
Paleontological Society
Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History
Santa Barbara Botanic Garden
Science Museum of Minnesota
Shirley C. Tucker Herbarium at Louisiana State University
Society for Freshwater Science
Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology
Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections
Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles
Society for the Study of Evolution
Society of Herbarium Curators
Society of Nematologists
Society of Systematic Biologists
Society of Vertebrate Paleontology
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
The Morton Arboretum
Torrey Botanical Society
Truckee Meadows Community College Natural History Museum
University & Jepson Herbaria
University of California Museum of Paleontology
University of Michigan Herbarium
University of Montana, MONTU Herbarium
University of Wyoming Museum of Vertebrates
Weed Science Society of America
Willard Sherman Turrell Herbarium
William P. Wall Museum of Natural History

cc:

Chair and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce

Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
(HELP)

Chair and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies