

April XX, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy and Schumer:

Thank you for your leadership and continued work to protect Americans, stabilize the economy, and ensure the survival of key institutions and sectors during this challenging time. We represent a group of chambers of commerce from XX states working with employers and businesses of all sizes and industries to respond to our national public health crisis.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided much-needed relief to many of our members, however, in practice, there are critical gaps in the CARES Act that fail to meet the needs of important organizations in our communities. If cultural institutions like aquariums, zoos, performance centers, and museums are to survive this crisis, we request that the U.S. Congress work swiftly to enact the following provisions:

- Increase the allocation to at least \$6 billion for the Institute of Museums and Library Services to provide direct economic relief for non-profit museums, aquariums, zoos, and performing arts centers. This funding should be used to provide grants for operational support, distance learning, and pandemic recovery planning and implementation.
- Increase and extend the Paycheck Protection Program and loan forgiveness provisions in the CARES Act through December 2020 and make non-profits – including zoos, aquariums, performing arts centers, and museums, with greater than 500 employees – eligible for loan forgiveness.
- Expand the universal charitable deduction provision by removing the \$300 cap and by eliminating the 60% limit on Adjusted Gross Income that may be deducted through charitable gifts of cash.
- Support the proposals of the Americans for the Arts that will stabilize both the assets of cultural organizations while they wait to reopen and help them when restarting is possible.

Collectively, the nation's performing arts centers, museums, zoos, and aquariums are losing millions of dollars a day due to closures and are in desperate need of significant federal support to continue to employ many thousands of people, rebuild our nation's tourism industry, and simply survive the months to come. As cash-based businesses, our economic stability depends on revenue generated from our

visitors. Initial furloughs and layoffs of personnel began in many institutions and will escalate as closures extend and event cancellations continue. Over and above losses in earned revenue and unreimitted expenses, these organizations are projecting a decline in charitable contributions as donors reassess their capacity to give.

The pandemic will have a devastating impact on performing arts centers, museums, aquariums, and zoos, which operate on thin margins of financial sustainability and without large designated operational reserve funds or access to tax-relief benefits. These institutions are important to every community, exposing residents to creativity and education and enhancing their quality of life.

Combined, the items listed above represent the minimum required support mechanisms to ensure that Americans still have these venerable and treasured places of learning, inspiration, and connection in our communities when better days return, and we are all able to leave our homes, travel to favorite destinations, and spend time with our family and friends.