



Sent via email

July 15, 2020

Sen. Dianne Feinstein  
Sen. Kamala Harris  
Rep. Mark DeSaulnier

The nation's museum community, while grateful for recent economic relief efforts, is facing an existential threat from the closures required to address the COVID-19 pandemic that requires major responses from the U.S. Congress beyond those contained in recent legislation. Preliminary data from an American Alliance of Museums survey shows that nearly 20% of museums face a significant risk of closing permanently. We urge you to:

- Expand the Paycheck Protection Program to allow existing borrowers to apply for additional loans and make nonprofits, including museums, with greater than 500 employees eligible for loan forgiveness.
- Provide loan forgiveness for nonprofits through the Federal Reserve's Main Street Lending Program.
- Allocate \$6 billion specifically for museums, to be administered by the IMLS - Office of Museum Services, for general operating support, assisting museums in developing and sharing distance learning content, and pandemic recovery planning and implementation, including improvements to protect employees and visitors and reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Expand the above-the-line or universal charitable deduction in the CARES Act by enacting the provisions in S. 4032/H.R. 7324, increasing the amount to one-third of the standard deduction; and extend this and the giving incentives enacted in the CARES Act through 2021.
- Provide \$42.7 million in FY 2021 funding for OMS, the amount approved by the U.S. House of Representatives last year, and at least \$170 million each for the NEH and NEA.

Museums are vital economic engines, contributing \$50 billion a year to the U.S. economy and generating \$12 billion in tax revenue to local, state, and federal governments. Museums are also job providers, supporting 726,000 jobs annually.

Our nonprofit organization, the Lindsay Wildlife Experience, in Walnut Creek, California, was deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our museum and education center closed to the public on March 13, 2020, and we lost all sources of revenue from admissions, education programs, outreach, and quite a few memberships. Our wildlife hospital (the first in the nation) and wildlife rehabilitation center has received and treated over 3,000 patients since the beginning of the year, over 2,300 since our closure. Similarly, our living collection of over 70 animal ambassadors require daily and continuous care by a skeleton crew that is working overtime due to our protection measures for our 500 volunteers who are sheltering in place.

The measures proposed above can make a huge difference in our ability to continue to provide essential wildlife care services to the East Bay counties. I urge you to approve the measures and avoid the loss of important community education and wildlife services.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carlos L. de la Rosa  
Executive Director