

Dear **(Recipient's Title and Name)**:

As a constituent living in <<**Your City/Town Name**>>, and a strong supporter of the <<**Your Museum's Name**>>'s, I want to share with you the positive impact of Illinois museums on our state, and the unique challenges our institutions are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The <<**Your Museum's Name**>> is one of more than 1,000 museums in Illinois that serve as important cornerstones of our communities –educating our students, attracting visitors and serving as economic engines.

In Illinois, museums have a total economic impact in excess of \$2.6 billion a year. Visitors to Illinois have increased by more than 26 million in the past decade, and tourism has emerged as one of our state's leading industries. Our museums attract more than 22 million visitors a year—more than all of Chicago's professional sports teams combined. More than 2.8 million school children benefit from field trips, outreach programs, after-school activities and cultural enrichment provided by Illinois museums. Now, our industry is faced with the most significant challenge since the Great Depression.

The Current Crisis: COVID-19

- More than 93% of our state's museums have seen significant cancellation of programs and events critical to raising operating income.
- Nearly 80% have identified negative budget implications caused by the strain of COVID-19 and the related economic crisis.
- Additional revenue streams, including sponsorships, site rentals and charitable gifts, are anticipated to diminish in the current economic climate.
- Despite these challenges, museums have made efforts to provide online and distance learning opportunities for families sheltering in place.
- However, national museum and cultural tourism organizations estimate that without meaningful federal and state assistance, 20-30% of museums nationwide may close their doors forever.

Illinois Priorities for Museums:

- Continued funding for the Public Museum Capital Grant Program for Fiscal Year 2021 in the amount of \$25 million
- Restoration of funding for the Public Museum Operating Grant Program for Fiscal Year 2021 in the amount of \$50 million
- Lifting of restrictions on matching requirements for state grant applicants
- Reinstatement of funding for the Illinois Association of Museums for Fiscal Year 2021 in the amount of \$250,000, so that we can provide critical resources to our museum community
- Continued support for our state-operated institutions, including the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Illinois State Museum System, and the 55 historic sites operated under the umbrella of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Continued support for the Illinois Arts Council and Illinois Office of Tourism

<<**At Our Museum: (add your story here.)**>>

I urge you to support legislative efforts to robustly fund museums during the COVID-19 crisis. Museums serve as a vital part of our nation's educational infrastructure, and are critical in the economic recovery of our region. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and please let me know if I can provide any additional information about my museum's role in the health of our community.

Sincerely,

<<**Your Name**>>