

February 21, 2020

Mr. Jon Parrish Peede  
Chairman  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
400 7th Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Chairman Peede,

I write to you to offer my full support for the application submitted by the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts (MFA-WC) to the National Endowment for the Humanities' Chairperson's Grant.

The Washington County Museum of Fine Art is a multi-state gem. The museum gives people from all backgrounds equal access to artwork and historical items that are significant to our community. Established in 1931 through a partnership between Mr. and Mrs. William H. and Anna Brugh Singer, the City of Hagerstown, Washington County, and State of Maryland, the museum has maintained free entry for all of its 88 years. Though the museum incurs significant costs each year, community leaders from Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, and Pennsylvania contribute to its upkeep and management in order to maintain free entry and equal access to all.

Over the past three years, the museum has averaged over 47,000 visitors a year with many of the attendees participating in field trips, educational programming, and tours. The Washington County Museum of Fine Arts has distinguished itself for nearly a century as a community meeting place and catalyst for meaningful conversation. Its collection of over 6,800 pieces of art from varied traditions and artists, including American and European painters and sculptors, serves as the starting point for many programs, presentations, and community discussions.

In 2019, a kidnapping threat during a school field trip highlighted the museum's need for increased security measures, including a lockdown system, cameras, and other measures to become a Safe Place. Through consultation with local law enforcement, the museum has identified multiple steps that can be taken to address the security of its facility and the safety of visitors. These improvements include a lock down system, security cameras, and communications equipment. Addressing the safety and security of the visitors and collection is of the utmost importance and the museum's staff has taken steps to educate themselves on best practices to respond to critical incidents. The museum's staff and

volunteers have planned a series of training sessions on field trip safety, crowd management, and other FEMA conducted classes, illustrating their commitment to keeping visitors safe while sharing in the collection, programs, and community discussions.

I respectfully request that you give all due consideration to the request submitted by the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts and believe that full funding will help the museum protect visitors and its collection. If you or any of your staff have questions, please feel free to contact Andrew Donlon of my staff at [Andrew.Donlon@mail.house.gov](mailto:Andrew.Donlon@mail.house.gov) or via phone at 301-926-0300.

Sincerely,

DAVID TRONE  
Member of Congress