March 19, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: California Arts & Humanities

Dear Chairwoman Skinner:

I write to request an appropriation of $40,000,000 to the California Arts Council and $2,000,000 to the California State Library for the purpose of funding California Humanities.

California Arts Council

There is currently no statewide government funder for the arts except for the California Arts Council (CAC). Arts Council grant funds are consistently oversubscribed. With a commitment to geographic and cultural diversity and a goal to distribute funds to every county in California, its current annual appropriation of $26 million falls far short of being enough. There are an estimated 11,000 non-profit arts organizations in California. In 2019, the Arts Council was only able to fund 12% of the total arts organizations in the state.

Increasing funding for the CAC to roughly $1 per resident will still place California far behind per capita investment of numerous other states. New York invests $2.31 per resident, while Minnesota spends more than $7 per capita. If we are to retain our claim as this nation’s creative capitol, we must demonstrate sincere commitment to art’s survival and sustainability.

Arts and culture businesses are also economic engines whose financial health is in the best interests of the California economy. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that in 2017, the arts and culture sector contributed $230.3 billion to California’s economy, representing 8.2% of the state’s GDP—a larger share of the state’s economy than Construction ($102 billion), or Transportation ($72 billion).
Our public investment in the arts should not pale in comparison to the sector’s corresponding economic impact. California’s current budget surplus should—in significant part—be dedicated to supporting the creative workforce and nonprofits that contribute to every community in California.

California Humanities

California Humanities is the Golden State’s only organization solely devoted to fostering the public humanities. The organization was chartered by the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, and partners with the National Endowment for the Humanities and private funders to provide and support public humanities programming throughout the state.

As recipient of $1 million in state general funds in FY 2019-2020, California Humanities was able to serve substantially more people and communities across California. Its goal was twofold: to expand existing programs within its strategic framework, and focus on equity, listening and responding to community needs across the state through the humanities—a unique role that it fills as the only public humanities-focused grant maker and program provider in the state.

Over the past calendar year, under the pressures of a global pandemic, California Humanities was able to combine state resources with other sources of funding to provide emergency relief and recovery grants to practitioners and organizations in dire need. Over half of its organizational grantees were new applicants; it provided grants to humanities projects—documentary films, exhibitions, community conversations, and more—across our state, connecting the people of California more intimately through shared histories, cultures, and ideas at a time when connection has been so difficult to find.

With more state support, California Humanities is poised to build upon its essential work in the face of an unpredictable post-pandemic recovery. It will have resources to increase its core grant making, which has more than doubled in the past six years, distributing more emergency relief and recovery funds to help our humanities sector rebuild and thrive.

Investment in humanities keeps California communities connected, fosters civic discourse, facilitates a more thorough investigation of the complexities of our time, and our essential humanity at the center of our lives.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

BEN ALLEN
Senator, 26th District
2021-2022 California State Budget
REQUEST SUMMARY

SENATOR BEN ALLEN

Staff contact: Zak Castillo-Krings
(916) 595-3967 mobile

Title of proposal California Arts & Humanities

Dollar amount of proposal for 2021-22 fiscal year:

$40,000,000 to the California Arts Council
$2,000,000 to California Humanities

Dollar amount ongoing: None

Source of funds: General Fund

Related policy bills: None

Entity to receive funds: California Arts Council
California State Library → California Humanities

Proposal summary

Arts Council grant funds are consistently oversubscribed. With a commitment to geographic and cultural diversity and a goal to distribute funds to every county in California, its current annual appropriation of $26 million falls far short of being enough. Increasing funding for the CAC to roughly $1 per resident will still place California far behind per capita investment of numerous other states. If we are to retain our claim as this nation’s creative capitol, we must demonstrate sincere commitment to art’s survival and sustainability.

As recipient of $1 million in state general funds in FY 2019-2020, California Humanities was able to serve substantially more people and communities across California. Over the past calendar year, under the pressures of a global pandemic, California Humanities was able to combine state resources with other sources of funding to provide emergency relief and recovery grants to practitioners and organizations in dire need. Over half of its organizational grantees were new applicants. With more state support, California Humanities is poised to build upon its essential work in the face of an unpredictable post-pandemic recovery. Investment in humanities keeps California communities connected, fosters civic discourse, facilitates a more thorough investigation of the complexities of our time, and our essential humanity at the center of our lives.