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September 14, 2011

Dear Member of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction:

As a co-chair of the bi-partisan, 184 Member Congressional Arts Caucus, I write to bring to your attention the attached letter sent by 36 of the leading arts organizations in regards to your work on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. The letter calls for the preservation of federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the final deficit reduction proposal.

The NEA has provided grants that spur economic activity in every Congressional District for over forty years. Each year, the arts industry generates \$166.2 billion in economic activity. At the same time, this industry returns \$12.6 billion to the federal government in income taxes, or in other words, for every one dollar in federal funding spent on the arts, nine dollars goes back into the U.S. Treasury. In addition, America's arts and entertainment are leading exports, with estimates of more than \$30 billion annually in overseas sales.

Continued funding for the NEA is a matter of American jobs. There are 756,007 arts related businesses in the United States that employ 3 million people, representing 4.14 percent of all businesses and 2.17 percent of all employees, respectively. From the work of nonprofit arts agencies to the impact of cultural tourism, the creative sector is important to local and state economies all across the country.

As you work toward your mission of reducing our nation's deficit in a responsible and productive manner, please take into consideration the incredible economic impact federal arts funding has on our jobs and economy and preserve federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Louise M. Slaughter".

Louise M. Slaughter

September 12, 2011

The Joint Select Deficit Reduction Committee  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator/Representative,

As the Joint Select Deficit Reduction Committee works on deciding how to achieve the goals of the recently passed Budget Control Act of 2011, S.365, we write to urge you to prevent cuts to funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The direct federal investment in the artistic capacity of our nation supports thousands of jobs, strengthens communities, improves learning for job preparation, and boosts this country's international competitive advantage.

Every U.S. Congressional district benefits from an NEA grant, leveraging additional support from a diverse range of private sources to combine funding from government, business, foundation, and individual donors. The NEA awarded almost 2,400 grants in those districts in FY 2010. The NEA has provided strategic leadership and investment in the arts for more than 40 years. Americans can now see professional productions and exhibitions of high quality in their own hometowns. Among the proudest accomplishments of the NEA is the growth of arts activity in areas of the nation that were previously underserved or not served at all, especially in rural and inner-city communities.

Nationally, there are more than 668,000 businesses involved in the creation or distribution of the arts that employ 2.9 million people including visual artists, performing artists, managers, marketers, technicians, teachers, designers, carpenters, and workers in a wide variety of trades and professions. By direct grants and through allocations to each state, NEA dollars are distributed widely to strengthen the arts infrastructure and ensure broad access to the arts for communities across the country. A strong arts sector is an economic asset that stimulates business activity, attracts tourism revenue, retains a high quality work force and stabilizes property values. The arts have been shown to be a successful and sustainable strategy for revitalizing rural areas, inner cities and populations struggling with poverty.

Small businesses and individual entrepreneurs are critical to every state's economy. The arts are a dynamic contributor to the small business sector. Leading public sector organizations—including the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Education Commission of the States—recognize the arts as part of a strong public policy portfolio. The creative industries are comprised of many talented workers who are self-employed, freelancers or employed by micro-enterprises. According to National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) analysis of U.S. Census occupational data, artists are 3.5 times more likely than other workers to be self-employed. Nonprofit organizations, too, are small businesses and play an important role in training creative workers and incubating artistic enterprises.

The arts address a shortage of innovative workers. Arts education provides skills critical to 21st-century success. The best paying jobs require workers with creativity and higher order thinking and communication skills, and companies are increasingly looking for these qualities in the workers they recruit. According to The Conference Board, eighty-five percent of business leaders say they can't find enough job applicants with creativity and innovation skills. Arts education, K-12 and beyond, is part of the solution to this challenge.

We understand fully the shared sacrifice that we all must make in order to help get our Nation's fiscal house in order and appreciate the Joint Committee's difficult task of reducing our long term deficit problem. But we urge you to resist reductions to the modest investment in our nation's arts and culture infrastructure as you deliberate how to best accomplish the goals set forth by the Budget Control Act.

Sincerely,

Actor's Equity Association  
Alliance of Artists Communities  
American Alliance for Theatre and Education  
American Association of Community Theatre  
American Association of Museums  
American Federation of Musicians  
American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works  
American Music Center  
American Music Therapy Association  
Americans for the Arts  
Americans for the Arts Action Fund  
Association of Art Museum Directors  
Association of Performing Arts Presenters  
Chamber Music America  
Chorus America  
Dance/USA  
Fractured Atlas  
Free Press  
Educational Theatre Association  
International Council of Fine Arts Deans  
League of American Orchestras  
Literary Network  
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education  
The MacDowell Colony  
National Alliance for Media Arts & Culture  
National Alliance for Musical Theatre  
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies  
National Association of Latino Arts and Culture  
National Dance Association  
National Network for Folk Arts in Education  
National Performance Network  
OPERA America  
Performing Arts Alliance  
Society for the Arts in Healthcare  
Theatre Communications Group  
Young Audiences Arts for Learning