

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

April 2, 2025

The Honorable Keith Sonderling  
Acting Director  
Institute of Museum and Library Services  
955 L'Enfant Plaza, North, SW, Suite 4000  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Sonderling:

We write to you with deep concerns regarding potential cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and to remind the administration of its obligation to execute the provisions of the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) of 2018, which was signed into law by President Trump. We also write to you with concerns over the news that IMLS has placed its entire staff on administrative leave.

The MLSA established IMLS and tasked the Director with the “primary responsibility for the development and implementation of policy to ensure the availability of museum, library, and information services adequate to meet the essential information, education, research, economic, cultural, and civic needs of the people of the United States.” It requires that the Institute has an Office of Museum Services and an Office of Library Services and details the federal programs to support museums and libraries that are to be carried out by each office.

For Fiscal Year 2024, Congress appropriated \$294.8 million for IMLS, and Oregon benefitted from nearly \$3.6 million of that funding. This includes more than \$2.5 million to Oregon for the grants to states program under the Library Services Technology Act, which is the largest source of federal funding support for library services in the United States. Funding for Oregon in Fiscal Year 2024 also included more than \$700,000 for Oregon museums to better serve the public, with funding for the Portland Art Museum, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, and the High Desert Museum.

We expect that the Administration will implement the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act of 2025 in a manner consistent with these allocations enacted in Fiscal Year 2024. We also expect that the Administration will allow the IMLS to engage with and support both libraries and museums as Congress intended and as authorized in the MLSA.

Libraries and museums play a vital role in our communities, including in the great state of Oregon. Libraries offer access for all to essential information and engagement on a wide range of topics, including skills and career training, broadband, and computing services. IMLS grants enable libraries to develop services in every community, including people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, residents of rural and urban areas, Native Americans, military families, veterans, and caregivers.

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For example, twenty-five percent of the State Library of Oregon's budget, approximately \$2.6 million, comes from IMLS. If these funds were to disappear, the budget for the SAGE courier system in Eastern Oregon, which transported 91,582 items across 15 rural counties in Eastern Oregon in Fiscal Year 2024, would be cut in half. Similarly, without this funding, K-12 students in Oregon would no longer have access to the online resources of the Oregon School Library Information System, which had 677,775 visits in Fiscal Year 2024.

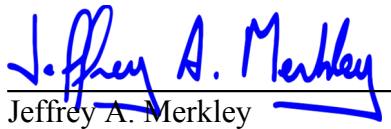
These cuts would also affect museums, which serve not only as centers for education but also as drivers of local economic development. The IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation's museums, which typically support more than 700,000 jobs and contribute \$50 billion annually to the U.S. economy. IMLS funding plays a significant role in this economic impact by helping museums reach more visitors and spur community development. For instance, Oregon's High Desert Museum has received \$1.43 million from IMLS grants over the last decade, which has allowed the museum to partner with the Museum at Warm Springs on Tribal programming and fund family workshops involving STEM in rural communities.

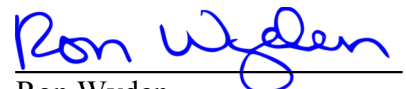
IMLS cuts also affect zoos and aquariums—including the Oregon Zoo and the Oregon Coast Aquarium—which use IMLS funds to contribute to the wellbeing and advancement of our communities and develop and expand programs that educate and engage Oregonians and visitors alike.

Finally, we write with serious concerns over the news that IMLS has placed its entire staff on administrative leave. According to the American Federation of Government Employees Local 3403, the entire IMLS staff was notified that they would be placed on paid administrative leave, effective immediately, following a meeting between staff from the Department of Government Efficiency and IMLS leadership. The consequences of these actions will have deep implications, as IMLS employees are critical to the work of museums and libraries across the country and are instrumental in carrying out the MLSA.

We hope you keep these impacts in mind, and we look forward to working with you to support IMLS in fulfilling its purpose and meeting all of its statutory requirements.

Sincerely,

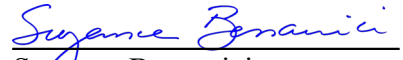
  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

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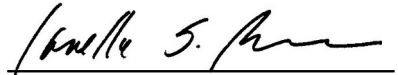
Maxine Dexter  
Member of Congress



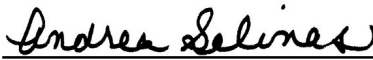
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