

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 21, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
Office of the Speaker  
U.S. Capitol H-232  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Leader Kevin McCarthy  
Office of the Minority Leader  
U.S. Capitol H-204  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

As members of the New York City Congressional Delegation, we ask that you provide at least \$4 billion in federal assistance to the nonprofit museum industry in the recovery package for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This financial support will ease the economic hardship facing nonprofit museums across the country, including New York City's over 100 nonprofit museums, and give them the stability they need to be able to recover and reopen once this crisis passes.

As you know, Americans across the nation are undertaking unprecedented measures in order to minimize the transmission of COVID-19. On March 15, 2020, the CDC urged that any gathering of 50 or more people be canceled or postponed for the next 8 weeks. The following day the president recommended that gatherings of 10 or more people be avoided. In response to these concerns, museums and cultural institutions around New York announced on March 12 they would voluntarily close their doors in order to slow the spread of the virus.<sup>1</sup> Nonprofit museums across the country followed suit and closed indefinitely, even though roughly 65 percent of their income comes directly from patrons.<sup>2</sup>

These decisions are saving American lives and are unequivocally the right choices. However, the economic ramifications of these decisions are devastating to the nonprofit museum community, and to their local economies. Museums in New York State support 61,000 jobs and generate \$5.4 billion annually in revenue.<sup>3</sup> New York City is home to some of the most prestigious,

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<sup>1</sup> Pogrebin, Robin, and Michael Cooper. "New York's Major Cultural Institutions Close in Response to Coronavirus." The New York Times. The New York Times, March 12, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/12/arts/design/met-museum-opera-carnegie-hall-close-coronavirus.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Bell, Ford W. "How Are Museums Supported Financially in the U.S.?" United States Department of State. United States Department of State - Bureau of International Information Programs, 2012.

[https://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/133183/english/P\\_You\\_Asked\\_How\\_Are\\_Museums\\_Supported\\_Financially.pdf](https://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/133183/english/P_You_Asked_How_Are_Museums_Supported_Financially.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> American Alliance of Museums. "New National Data Reveals the Economic Impact of Museums Is More than Double Previous Estimates." American Alliance of Museums. American Alliance of Museums, May 7, 2019.

<https://www.aam-us.org/2018/02/13/new-national-data-reveals-the-economic-impact-of-museums-is-more-than-double-previous-estimates/>.

innovative, and diverse museums in the world, including major art museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MOMA, and the Whitney; cultural and historical museums like the Museum of Chinese in America and the City Museum of New York; and international landmarks like the American Museum of Natural History.

No matter their size, for nearly every nonprofit museum, revenue comes through fundraising, charitable donations, and earned revenue, which includes revenue from museum exhibitions, educational programs, retail sales, and venue rentals.<sup>4</sup> Without patronage, the earned revenue stream has evaporated virtually overnight. Museums cannot hold fundraising events for fear of transmitting the virus, and donors are understandably more hesitant to make charitable contributions given the economic uncertainty they face. The Metropolitan Museum of Art projects that it will lose close to \$100 million in the coming months because of the shutdowns, while the American Museum of Natural History estimates it will lose \$60 million by June.<sup>5</sup>

Due to the nature of the nonprofit industry, many of these museums do not have the savings necessary to survive such a hit. The American Alliance of Museums estimates that as many as 30 percent of museums will not be able to re-open after this crisis has passed without significant and immediate emergency financial assistance. Layoffs have already begun to sweep the more than seven hundred thousand Americans employed by museums nationwide, including the 61,000 museum employees in New York City and State. Without help, our nation's nonprofit museums cannot survive, and a vital part of New York and American culture will be lost forever.

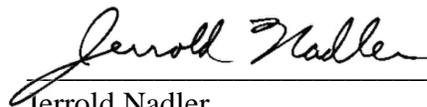
By providing \$4 billion in emergency funding for nonprofit museums we can equip these museums to outlast this pandemic and continue their invaluable roles in preserving American art, history, and culture.

We thank you for your attention to this matter, and for your work on behalf of the nation during this crisis.

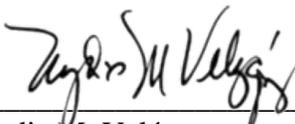
Sincerely,



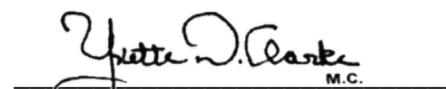
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



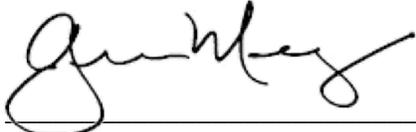
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



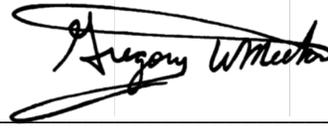
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

<sup>4</sup> Bell, Ford. W. "How Are Museums Supported Financially in the U.S.?"

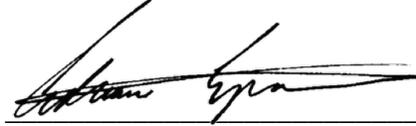
<sup>5</sup> Pogrebin, Robin. "Met Museum Prepares for \$100 Million Loss and Closure Till July." The New York Times. The New York Times, March 18, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/arts/design/met-museum-coronavirus-closure.html>.



Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



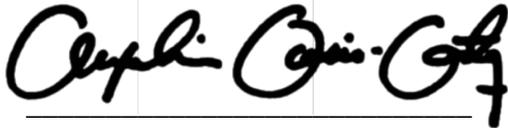
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



Hakeem S. Jeffries  
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Chairwoman of the House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee