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American
Association
of
Museums

Edward H. Able, Jr.
Executive Director

June 12, 1990

The Honorable Claiborne Pell
Chairman
Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities
Committee on Labor and Human Resources
SD-648 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to you to express the concern of the American Association of Museums (AAM) and its more than 11,000 members regarding proposed revisions to Section 206(B) of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act, the enabling statute of the Institute of Museum Services (IMS), dealing with contracts and cooperative agreements with professional museum organizations.

The proposed amendment would no longer authorize the Institute of Museum Services to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements exclusively with professional museum organizations to undertake projects designed to strengthen museum services. The IMS would have the authority to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with any entity under the proposed changes.

Certainly, as the national service organization for 2,300 art, history and science museums, and institutions with living collections, as well as 8,000 professionals and trustees that serve them, the AAM believes strongly that any initiative to improve the professionalism and operations of museums is important and should be pursued. We supported the establishment of the IMS Professional Services program and have encouraged adequate funding for the program since its inception. However, given the very limited financial resources reserved for the Professional Services Program (PSP), \$250,000 in FY 1990, and its short history, we do not support expanding this program beyond private, nonprofit professional museum-related organizations, whose very mission is to enhance and support professional museum services.

The types of projects that have been funded through the program have been uniquely designed by professional museum organizations to address the needs and challenges of museums. The AAM has been fortunate to receive two PSP grants: one for a national data collection project involving a comprehensive

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survey of information of museums in the United States; a second for a new component of Museum Assessment Program to assist museums in their interaction with the public through educational programs, exhibitions, and audience development, research and marketing.

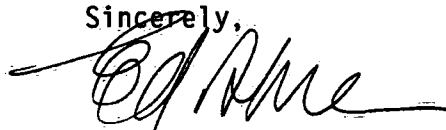
Other PSP grants have been awarded to professional museum organizations such as the Association of Science-Technology Centers to produce a reference manual that will help museum exhibit designers apply the findings of ergonomic research to the development of interactive exhibits that are safer, easier to understand, and accessible to a wider range of visitors. The American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums also received a 1989 PSP grant to organize a workshop where leading conservation biologists will assemble to review current scientific techniques for genetic and demographic management of species in captivity and to formulate new methodology.

In addition to these national museum service organizations, state and regional museum associations are eligible for grant support and several have been successful applicants to the program. There are forty-six state museum associations and six regional museum organizations that provide on-going professional and technical service to museums in their states and regions. A 1989 PSP grant to the Texas Association of Museums will increase communications among Texas museums through the publication of a technical assistance directory addressing in-state professional resources, exhibitions and collections. A new database system will be designed to hold comprehensive information about Texas museums.

With a broader pool of potential applicants, and no additional resources, projects such as those designed by national organizations, as well as state and regional organizations and associations, whose specific mission is to serve our nation's museums, might not be funded.

We respectfully request that the subcommittee retain the current language in the statute in this section. If we may provide any further information, we stand ready to assist you and the subcommittee.

Sincerely,



Edward H. Able, Jr.
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Nancy Landon Kassebaum
Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee
on Education, Arts and Humanities
Geoffrey Platt Jr., AAM Director of Government Affairs