



Suzan E. Jenkins, CEO

Testimony to Request
Additional Public Health Emergency Grants (PHEG) for
Arts and Humanities organizations and individual artists and scholars

11-10-2020

Good Afternoon Council Members. I hope this message finds you and your families well. I am Suzan Jenkins, CEO of the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC). I am here to thank you for your past support of our agency and sector, testify on its behalf and ask for additional emergency relief and capacity building support.

I begin by acknowledging that we are in Montgomery County, MD, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Accohannock, Assateague, Piscataway, Pocomoke, Shawnee and Nause-Waiwash People.

Like many small businesses, the 2020 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the arts and humanities and created destabilizing conditions that threaten long-term financial stability. Americans for the Arts calculated \$14.1 billion in losses at the national level. Today I ask that the County Council approve an additional round of funding for arts and humanities organizations and individual artists and scholars of \$334,500 and that you approve \$71,690 in funding to support one-time capacity-building funds to the Arts & Humanities Council as we support our sector during this dynamic upheaval.

We are grateful that earlier this year, in response to the impact of the pandemic on our highly vulnerable sector, the Montgomery County Government provided \$3,250,000 in emergency relief funds to AHCMC for regranting. The Arts & Humanities COVID-19 Relief Fund was available to Montgomery County, MD based non-profit arts and/or humanities organizations and individual artists/scholars experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. The Arts & Humanities COVID-19 Relief Fund allows recipients the flexibility to use funds for their most urgent needs, supporting day-to-day operating costs and furthering the general mission or work of an organization or individual artist/scholar. Rather than funding a particular project, relief funds can be used for programming costs or vital administrative costs, such as rent (as long as the applicant does not operate out of a county-owned facility), utilities, and employee salaries. The application deadline was September 14, 2020. Directly after the deadline passed,



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AHCMC staff conducted an eligibility check for all applicants based on the eligibility criteria explained within the Arts and Humanities COVID-19 Relief Fund Guidelines.

A total of 226 applications were submitted for the Arts & Humanities COVID-19 Relief Fund. \$3,000,000 was available for eligible arts/humanities organizations and \$250,000 was available for eligible artists/scholars. The maximum award amount for organizations is \$100,000 and the maximum award amount for individuals is \$1,500. AHCMC disbursed the majority of these funds but fell short of disbursing the maximum award for all applicants due to a lack of funds.

FY21 COVID-19 - Additional Relief Funds Request

Like you, our community is concerned regarding the uptick in coronavirus cases in our county and urge the utmost caution and dependence on science to determine how best to reopen. Once it is safe, we entreat you to implement equitable and consistent guidelines and policies related to reopening Montgomery County that center the arts and humanities along with other sectors in the county.

In the September 2020 round of Arts & Humanities COVID-19 Relief Fund applications, AHCMC learned that current award limitation recommendations did not adequately address the needs of the arts and humanities in Montgomery County. Data collected from 103 Arts & Humanities COVID-19 Relief Fund applications in September 2020 is staggering, with 10,193 cancelled events, resulting in 1,049,266 cancelled tickets and individual experiences. The data also reflects \$45 million in aggregate negative financial impact from: \$32.8 million in lost revenue, \$9.3 million in lost contributions, \$1.5 million in non-refundable event expenses, and \$1.8 million in new expenses across the sector, a 300% greater impact to the arts and humanities than organizations originally predicted. Additionally, individual artists and scholars reported \$1.8 million in aggregate negative financial impact.



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It is clear that the substantial damage caused to the creative economy from business closures and event prohibitions due to the pandemic requires increased emergency support for organizations and individuals across the cultural sector to offset increased losses, expenses, and reopening costs.

I ask today that the County Council approve an additional round of emergency funds for arts and humanities organizations and individual artists and scholars of \$334,500 and that you approve \$71,690 in funding to support capacity-building at AHCMC so that we might meet demand from the many organizations and individual artists and scholars which require technical assistance and professional development to navigate, network and nuance the new realities in our sector.

Thank you for your past support. We look forward to continuing our great work, bolstering our economy and making Montgomery County a vibrant place to live, work and play, together with you.