Public Statement Wednesday, September 26, 2018

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, PARKS, ARTS AND SPORTS

ASSEMBLY SUBCOMMITTEE ON MUSEUMS & CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

SUBJECT: Impact of Arts and Cultural Organizations on the State’s Economy

PURPOSE: To examine the impact New York’s artistic and cultural institutions have on the economy of the State.

The Museum Association of New York was honored to be asked to deliver testimony on this subject and sincerely regrets that our Museum Institute at Great Camp Sagamore was scheduled at the same time as this hearing. We hope to continue to be invited to share our perspective and to be able to participate with oral testimony at future hearings.

MANY was granted its New York State charter in January of 1962. It was one of the first professional organizations supported by the New York State Council on the Arts (1961) and pre-dates the formation of the National Endowments for the Humanities and the Arts (1965) and Humanities New York (1975). In 2014, MuseumWise and MANY merged under the Museum Association of New York creating an organization uniquely qualified to serve all of our state’s arts, history, and cultural organizations.

We are the only statewide association of professionals speaking with one powerful voice serving New York’s museums, historic sites, wildlife centers, and cultural institutions. MANY’s 607 members (55% growth since September 2016) represent the full range of museum disciplines, budget sizes, missions, and geographic locations in our state. The 24 members of the board of trustees represent the ten economic development regions — balancing expertise and skills with the strength of diversity and regional representation.

MANY helps our members and colleagues amplify their message and share best practices. Our vision is to ensure that New York State museums operate at their full potential as economic drivers and essential components of their communities.
According to a 2017 Oxford Economics report commissioned by the American Alliance of Museums, New York State’s museums, wildlife centers, and gardens are anchors and magnets. They support 61,000 jobs, generate 5.4 billion dollars in economic impact, and 1.4 billion dollars in tax revenues. These are only the broadest strokes that define the ways in which museums significantly impact our State’s smallest communities, largest cities, counties, and regions.

The New York State Council on the Arts plays an essential role in funding our state’s museums and cultural organizations. However, many of organizations are not aware of how this funding can be used to advance an organization’s programs, or they are not eligible under current guidelines. Funding through the REDC CFA, especially with capital funding grant opportunities, has had great impact for some of our state’s most prominent institutions, but matching requirements and perception of difficulty of the process has restricted application opportunities. Program and marketing funding for museums - no matter their budget size – that will help them serve their communities and attract tourists is most critically needed. As addressed in the attached comments submitted by MANY members, festivals and conferences boost local economies and create unique tourism opportunities, but unless those special events can be sustained and grown over time, our sector’s financial stability remains tenuous.

In January of 2019, MANY will be issuing a field wide survey gathering data to benchmark earned and raised income, employment and industry spending, and education services in our state’s museums. We will also be seeking funding to explore the following questions in a formal economic impact study:

- How can efforts to grow museums and museum programs play into mainstream economic development efforts?
- Are there unexploited opportunities to boost performance in the museum sector?
- What types of programs or policies would support increases in multiplier effects for museums?
- What benefits might come to local economies from more emphasis and/or more aggressive efforts to target visitors and tourists?
- How can educators, community leaders, and public agencies intervene with the museum industry in ways that lead to cumulative improvements in the economic and social climate for museums?

We look forward to sharing the results of our survey and reading statements of others who give testimony here. I would like to thank Assembly Member Daniel J. O’Donnell, Chair, Committee of Tourism, Arts and Sports Development and Robert C. Carroll Chair, Subcommittee on Museums & Cultural Institutions for their support of New York State museums and the opportunity to present this testimony.

Sincerely,

Erika Sanger, Executive Director
Museum Association of New York
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Statements submitted by MANY Members
To:
ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, PARKS, ARTS AND SPORTS
ASSEMBLY SUBCOMMITTEE ON MUSEUMS & CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

The Schoharie County Historical Society
Schoharie, NY
The importance of arts and cultural tourism on our local economy is tremendous. Ever since the floods of 2011 (Irene and Lee) our county has had a long road of getting itself back to normal in regards to its’ local economy. While great strides have been made, we still find ourselves lacking in the amount of income that we used to enjoy through visitors to our county. As we in the SCHS continue to work toward improving our offerings of State and local history, we would greatly benefit from a fully funded program supporting an educational outreach director. We have begun by creating this position, but it is not easy keeping it in our budget due to other costs that our Society is such us upkeep of our buildings and collections. State-supported programs that enhance The Schoharie County Historical Society and Old Stone Fort are a must for our local communities to have to ensure the proper upkeep and development of our institution. Support from NYS is crucial in making sure that these institutions remain an important and effective part of our state. Events such as the Old Stone Fort History Fair each October helps to promote visitors to our county and state, which in turn have a huge impact on the local economy. We here in Schoharie County have not fully recovered from the devastating effects of the flooding in 2011 caused by Irene and Lee. As we have continued with our annual event, in spite of the setbacks experienced in 2011, we have become a way for our county to rally back and show pride for our local institutions.

The Corning Museum of Glass
Corning, NY
In May 2018, The Corning Museum of Glass launched GlassBarge, a 30’ x 80’ canal barge equipped with a mobile glassmaking studio, which visited 29 cities across New York State during its four-month tour. GlassBarge presented free demos to more than 58,000 people, giving them a taste of glassmaking close to home, and enticing them to learn more during a visit to The Corning Museum of Glass. The GlassBarge tour was realized through the generous support of grants from I LOVE NEW YORK, Empire State Development’s Division of Tourism; the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA); and the New York State Canal Corporation through Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Council Initiative. The ambitious collaborative project supported the missions of three partnering cultural institutions which joined forces to present the tour: The Corning Museum of Glass, South Street Seaport Museum, and the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (VT).
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The Corning Museum of Glass cont.
In September 2018, The Corning Museum of Glass hosted TBEX (Travel Blog Exchange), the largest international conference for the most influential travel writers and content creators in the travel industry. Nearly 700 travel influencers and brands traveled to the Museum from 23 countries across the globe. In addition to spending four days at the Museum during the conference, attendees explored Finger Lakes Wine Country and shared highlights with their followers on traditional and social media channels. TBEX attendees spend on average 10 days in a host destination, providing a significant boost to local economies through tourism spending such as lodging, dining, shopping, and entertainment. We anticipate the long-term impact of heightened media attention will pay dividends for the local and regional economies for years to come.

Genesee Country Village & Museum
Mumford, NY
Genesee Country Village & Museum receives funding from Empire State Development, NYSCA, and a variety of other NYS programs and this money allows us to undertake programs and marketing initiatives that help our organization to grow and thrive and attract new visitors from throughout the world. In Rochester, we have seen that festivals like Jazz Fest and Fringe Fest attract visitors from throughout the country, as do conferences like the MANY and ALHFAM ones that we’ve hosted over the past two years. We know that special events at GCV&M like our Maple Sugar Festival and Agricultural Fair also attract visitors from throughout the country based on our zip code analysis.

Oneida Community Mansion House
Oneida, NY
Oneida Community Mansion House is a tourist destination, drawing thousands of visitors to the region. The museum educates young and old: school groups, hosts college classes and offers adult educational programming and volunteer opportunities. OCMH employs 14+ full, part-time and seasonal staff. The house is a home to 30 residents, an overnight lodge for tourists, and an iconic rental facility for special events for all. Like other arts and cultural sites, OCMH nurtures creative and intellectual pursuits, reinforces and preserves a sense of place and is a venue for arts and culture, making NYS a great place to live, work and visit. State support is critical to other educational endeavors and should be increased for arts and cultural sites since educational benefits cannot always be monetized and profit driven. NYSCA is helpful but does not provide enough support. NYSCA and CFA grants require intense administration and capacity to maintain and access. A profit driven model alone would leave vulnerable populations with less educational, cultural resources and access. Many museums have cut their education programs due to lack of financial support.
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Oneida Community Mansion House cont.
State support for museum education would allow museums and schools to more closely work together to serve the public and make art and culture accessible to all. Museums have minimal budgets for marketing--yet visitors come. Can we imagine the tourists that would come if they knew all NYS had to offer? Too many museums and sites are referred to as "hidden gems." Festivals, conferences and events would bring more tourists who would spend, stay, eat and shop in our region. Many tourists are seeking "authentic experiences." There is no better forum or site for authenticity than a local museum or cultural site.

Fort Ontario & the Richardson Bates House Museum
Oswego, NY
Arts and Cultural Tourism has a very large impact on my area of Oswego County. As a volunteer at both Fort Ontario and the Richardson Bates House Museum, I meet people who have traveled from all over the country and often the world to visit Oswego and learn about the historical background of the port city and its environs. They provide business to hotels, restaurants, campgrounds, gas stations and local vendors of all kinds. We provide information for people who are researching their roots, and many who just have an interest in history. Sadly, state support for the arts and cultural institutions is dramatically less than it has been in the past. I see fewer support staff and furnished exhibits at Fort Ontario than twenty years ago. Although there is an excellent new interpretive exhibit on the 260+ year history of the fort, created by the State Historic Preservation Office, visitors comment on what is missing from their memories of the fort of their childhood. We utilize remaining grants from NYSCA and Humanities NY, and have effectively created projects and events that have enhanced the visitor experience. We see enormous value in creating events that draw visitors to the area. Our Bemelmans Festival in June draws up to 1000 people from a 50-mile radius for a day-long family event celebrating the connection that Fort Ontario has with Ludwig Bemelmans, the famous author of the Madeline children’s book series. The Fort Ontario Conference on History and Archeology in April pulls speakers and audiences from Canada and the US to share important topics on the significance of Fort Ontario in world history. Although in terms of drawing tourism dollars to the area, they can’t compete with the older and larger events such as Harborfest in Oswego, these relatively new events have potential to generate interest in and bring excitement to heritage tourism in the city.

The Wild Center
Tupper Lake, NY
As the Northcountry has sought to bolster its economy, the arts have emerged as a powerful asset. There is a strong community of artists here, and they are passionate about their community. Their work has included arranging music festivals like Saranac
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The Wild Center cont.
Lake's Hobofest and developing cultural hubs like the Tupper Arts Center. At The Wild Center, we've even integrated art into our science natural history programming with experiences like Art in the Park, a summer series inviting local artists to the museum for a workshop that connects people with nature through creative expression. The arts permeate all aspects of the Northcountry, and is an integral part of uplifting these communities. The Wild Center hosts festivals, meetings, and conferences that have increased tourism and impacted local economies. Events like Build A Greener Adirondacks bring constructions and design professionals to create a vision of a sustainable future for the Adirondacks. Throughout the summer we host multiple events that have over 1,000 attendees. These serve the purpose of bring money into the community, while simultaneously cultivating an awareness of Tupper Lake as a destination for arts, entertainment, and science.

National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum
Cooperstown, NY
Cultural institutions often serve as the anchor of a region’s tourism economy and The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is a perfect example. First opening its doors in 1939, the Museum has welcomed more than 17 million visitors to Cooperstown, a village with less than 2,000 year-round residents. The Museum’s annual budget hovers around $15 million, but the economic impact of its visitors on the region is more than $150 million annually. To put it simply, less than ten cents of every dollar in economic activity generated by the Museum ends up funding the Museum’s operations. This illustrates the critical need for New York State to help the Museum promote visitation through the I Love NY program and provide funding through the Market NY program. The Museum simply cannot justify investing enough in marketing through its operating budget to move the needle for the region, when more than 90% of the spending from visitors occurs at local restaurants, hotels, retail stores, gas stations and other attractions. The marketing programs funded by New York State help ensure the continued success and growth of tourism for the region, and support hundreds of business who depend on the visitors drawn by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. This is a scenario echoed across New York as cultural institutions are often the reason people visit, but they capture only a fraction of the visitor spending.