

North Dakota Museum of Art

March 24, 2021

Re: HB1395

Matthew Wallace
Deputy Director
North Dakota Museum of Art
701-777-4195

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Matthew Wallace and I am the Deputy Director for the North Dakota Museum of Art in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I am writing in support of the North Dakota Council on the Arts receiving unspent Coronavirus Relief Fund monies – HB1395. The Museum is the official State Art Museum, and as such works to serve the entire state of North Dakota. The Museum's Rural Arts Initiative brings exhibitions of original artwork to communities across the State ranging from 60 to 60,000 people. In addition, the North Dakota Museum of Art hosts classical concerts on Sunday afternoon in the galleries, outdoor concerts by nationally touring musicians in the sculpture garden, and summers full of art camps for children.

Last March the Museum was hit hard by the pandemic. The Museum was forced to close to the public and all fundraisers and ticketed events were canceled. Summer Art Camps were canceled during this time, as well as the Concerts in the Garden, which draw 300 – 800 people per concert. When we closed to the public, the Museum Cafe took the menu online and tried unsuccessfully for weeks to create a take-out business. Being the only restaurant on campus didn't provide the draw needed to keep the Cafe open. No events were taking place on campus and guests simply quit coming. In September the Museum implemented part-time hours, however, recently, the Museum re-opened full-time. The Cafe remains closed as campus is nearly empty and will remain so through the summer. The only fundraiser the Museum was able to do during this time was an online art auction. The auction was successful and allowed the Museum to expand our buying audience, however, it didn't generate the revenue of the two canceled auctions.

The North Dakota Council on the Arts helped keep the Museum going during these lean months through institutional support and CARES funding. The \$21,000 the Museum received in December 2020, paid salaries for the month and kept staff working through the holiday season. Although the Museum wasn't doing in-person events, staff used this time to clean up important behind the scenes projects that will ultimately benefit the Museum's audience. For example, much of this time allowed staff to work on the Permanent Collection. During this time they sorted through over 300 photographs from Jim Dow's North Dakota series that will be entered into the collection. These photographs detail folk art, architecture, prairie churches, and the things North Dakotans make in their shops during the long winter months.

Please note that the amount NDCA allotted was extremely helpful in keeping staff employed and getting important projects finished, however, another round is needed. Large foundations that fund the arts are out of state. These foundations that the Museum depended on in the past have mostly shifted their giving focus away from the arts at this time. Those that are still giving have reduced their giving amount. Staff feel optimistic about the future but we do seek more funds to make it back to pre-pandemic times.