March 11, 2020

RE: Potential Aid for Industries Impacted by Coronavirus

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy and Schumer:

I write regarding prospective federal intervention to support the airline, travel and other targeted industries impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. The National Council on Public History (NCPH) urges you to also include associations, nonprofits and other tax-exempt organizations within any federal aid packages or supplemental appropriations measures, as many have been and will be harmed by event cancellations and reduced meeting attendance as a result of COVID-19. NCPH is a membership association dedicated to making the past useful in the present and to encouraging collaboration between historians and their publics.

According to the Events Industry Council’s 2018 Economic Significant Study conducted by Oxford Economics¹, more than 1.9 million meetings occur in the United States each year – with more than 250 million attendees. These meetings contribute more than $446 billion to U.S. gross domestic product and directly support 5.9 million jobs nationwide.

The coronavirus emergency has forced NCPH to cancel our annual meeting, scheduled for March 18-21, 2020, which would have brought almost a thousand historians, archivists, curators, professors and other history practitioners from across the country and around the world to Atlanta. Cancelation at this point has real financial implications for our organization. In addition to lost revenues, we face substantial penalties associated with contractual obligations to the conference hotel and other vendors. These costs will necessitate hard decisions concerning our endowment, reserve funds, and operating budget, as well as the potential assumption of debt, all of which will have long-standing consequences for the

organization moving forward. The NCPH board chose to cancel the in-person meeting because, despite the severity of the financial consequences, the health and well-being of our conference participants and their communities outweighed these concerns.

As you are no doubt aware, the fast-spreading COVID-19 epidemic has prompted the cancellation of dozens of major meetings and events in the U.S. and forced other event sponsors to consider cancelling or postponing innumerable other events dependent on in-person attendance at convention centers, hotels and other event facilities. Many of these meetings and events also attract international participants, who generate 11.5 percent (about $38 billion) of direct spending during their visits to the U.S. International travel to the U.S. has dropped sharply during the COVID-19 outbreak and signs point to this trend growing until the virus is brought under control. The U.S. Travel Association forecasts international flights to the U.S. will plummet six percent over the next three months alone, which would be the largest decline since the 2008 economic crisis.

Additionally, many associations operate similarly to small businesses and are greatly impacted if employees are forced to take sick leave or are quarantined as a result of COVID-19 interaction. We are aware the Trump Administration and Congress are considering measures for small businesses that may require cash flow assistance amid the outbreak, and urge that tax-exempt entities be included in any temporary aid designed to stem the economic fallout resulting from COVID-19.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Rowe
Executive Director

CC:

The Honorable Richard Neal, Chairman
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The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives Committee on Ways & Means
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The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman
United States Senate Committee on Finance
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The Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on Finance