



April 3, 2017

We are writing today as artists and arts leaders to publically declare our support for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. A country's regard for the arts is a fundamental statement about its values. The proposed elimination of the NEA, and with it, the National Endowment for the Humanities, is a debasement of the core values that represent the very best of the American creed: a commitment to the beauty of diversity, to the thrill of experimentation, and to the communion of understanding between the artist and the public.

Diverse art matters: we are a nation of immigrants from across the globe who have brought their own art forms and traditions to flourish within the promise of the American respect for cultural freedom. To support the arts in America means to recognize the range of artistic expression and influence that makes us who we are. This is the NEA's purpose, which it achieves with great dignity in working with panelists in every discipline from across the nation, and funding every Congressional district.

Supporting the arts is an expression of hope in the next generation of artists, arts organizations, and arts audiences. This is especially true for the thousands of children whose lives are forever transformed by the opportunity to hear a symphony or experience a ballet, play or painting for the first time—and all funded by the NEA.

We believe in the NEA's importance in reflecting the very best of America to each other, and to the rest of the world. Like America herself, the creative mind is dynamic. Artists are often our best translators of the present and our best guides to the future: poems help us grieve and celebrate, new artistic techniques from the studio and stage innovate business practices. And, the arts revitalize the neighborhoods around them: the NEA is a leader in recognizing that funding the arts is an investment in community. Indeed, the country's non-profit arts industry alone generates \$135 billion in economic activity every year.

At the signing of the Arts and Humanities Bill in 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson said: "It is in our works of art that we reveal to ourselves, and to others, the inner vision which guides us as a Nation."

Today, 52 years later in 2017, what do we want to reveal about America to ourselves, and to others around the world? That we are afraid of what is different and new? Or that we have the courage to be curious?

We believe as artists, and as Americans, that we must have the courage to ask the questions art raises, and be open to the moments of incomparable transcendence art gives us: this is the America we are, and the country the NEA ensures we can be.

We strongly urge you to support the continued funding of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities: for the artists of today, and for all of us tomorrow.

Mikhail Baryshnikov
Artistic Director
Baryshnikov Arts Center

Diana DiMenna
Chairman of the Board
Baryshnikov Arts Center