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Seward House Museum

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Peter Hyde Design

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and Museum

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Mid-Hudson Children's Museum

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Melinda McTaggart  
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Asia Society

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Albany Institute of History & Art

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Erie Canal Museum

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Buffalo Museum of Science,  
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Erika Sanger  
*Executive Director*

February 14, 2022

Thank you, Liz Krueger, Chair of the Senate Finance Committee; Helene Weinstein, Chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and distinguished members of the committees for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

My name is Erika Sanger and I am the Executive Director of the Museum Association of New York, a 501(c)(3) organization chartered by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to help shape a better future for New York's museums and museum professionals by uplifting best practices and building organizational capacity through advocacy, training, and networking opportunities.

New York's museums are economic drivers, community anchors, and tourist destinations. They are the repository for New York's history, art, and culture. Museums are chartered by NYSED and are legally bound to sustain and share their historic structures and collections with the communities they serve.

MANY asked its members and supporters to help us advocate for state recovery funds by comparing specific data points for calendar year 2019 with calendar year 2021. New York's museums are in desperate need of recovery support to allow them to recover and reclaim their roles as essential community anchors, economic engines, and tourist destinations.

Museums of all sizes, locations, and disciplines reported:

- A 48% average loss in visitor attendance.
- An average decrease in the number of open hours of 29%
- An average loss of 12% of their staff.
- An average decrease in K-12 school group visits of 63%.
- In 2020, 75% of museums lost more than 1/3 of earned income
- Public service staff were the vast majority of those who lost jobs, and many have yet to be re-hired.
- 82% agreed that the pandemic will make a lasting impact on the way museums operate and serve audiences.

New York's museums are in desperate need of recovery support to allow them to reclaim their roles as essential community anchors, economic engines, and tourist destinations.

Museum Association of New York  
Legislative Budget Hearing on Economic Development  
2/16/22 Testimony page two

Masha Turchinsky, Executive Director of the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers added the following passionate and urgent statement to survey her response:

“Museums compete for funding in a landscape of increased applicants and few dollars. As museums struggle financially, we simultaneously witness in real time the growing rift between the privileged and the needy. Museums located in cities and zip codes with significant student food scarcity and high jobless rates are impacted disproportionately. We need a lifeline from New York State to ensure the sustainability of our museums, and our communities’ futures.”

Museums are looking for:

- Post-pandemic strategies for survival
- Pathways to financial sustainability, and
- Ways to support staff and create organizationally healthier institutions

MANY is seeking funding for our state museums that serves their current needs and can be distributed equitably regardless of discipline, budget size, or location. The pandemic made a lasting impact on the way museums operate and serve audiences. Trends indicate museums will not recover until 2024 when most school children can visit museums again.

In closing, we want to thank the legislature for the historic \$100,000,000 appropriation for the New York State Council on the Arts for FY 2022 and we extend our thanks to NYSCA for awarding MANY a \$575,000 grant establishing a new partnership program that will award capacity building grants of \$5,000 each to 100 museums. Grants will be distributed to museums for: response to pandemic challenges, build financial stability, expand community engagement, update technology, and change systems to address diversity, equity, access, inclusion, and justice.

Respectfully submitted,



Erika Sanger  
Executive Director  
Museum Association of New York