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April 4, 2025

The Honorable Keith Sonderling
Acting Director
Institute of Museum and Library Services
955 L'Enfant Plaza, North, SW, Suite 4000 Washington,
D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Sonderling,

I write seeking documents and information from the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS) about its response to recent actions by President Trump to dismantle the agency, actions which threaten the ability of libraries and museums across the country to serve their communities.

From rural towns to bustling cities, libraries and museums play a critical role in communities across the country. Libraries provide not only books and reference materials but serve as a natural hub for a multitude of community services including early and adult literacy programs, workforce development opportunities, broadband and technology access, and resources for individuals with disabilities. Museums serve as cultural hubs where people can engage in lifelong learning on a diverse range of topics such as American and world history, the arts, humanities, and sciences. IMLS is the only federal agency dedicated to supporting these efforts through administering grants and disseminating research to improve museum and library services.

On Friday, March 14, President Trump issued Executive Order 14238, "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy" (EO).¹ The EO states that IMLS, among other important agencies, "shall be eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law" saying IMLS must "reduce the performance of [its] statutory functions and associated personnel to the minimum presence and function required by law."² The EO further required you, as IMLS'

¹ Exec. Order No. 14,238, 90 Fed. Reg. 13043-44 (Mar. 20, 2025).

² *Id.*

Acting Director, to submit to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by The Honorable Keith Sonderling 2

Friday, March 21 a report confirming compliance and describing the statutorily required functions of IMLS.

While the EO purports to act within the bounds of the law, subsequent actions at IMLS, arguably taken in accordance with the EO, call into question whether goals of the EO can be effectuated under current law. For example, the EO orders the OMB Director “to the extent consistent with applicable law and except insofar as necessary to effectuate an expected termination, reject funding requests for such governmental entities to the extent they are inconsistent with this order.”³ Further, according to AFGE Local 3403, the entire IMLS staff was placed on administrative leave on Friday, March 29 for an indeterminate amount of time.⁴ It is also my understanding that libraries recently began receiving notices regarding current grant award cancellations without justifications provided for such cancellations. I am deeply concerned about the lack of communication provided to grant recipients regarding these drastic changes.

The Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA), 20 U.S.C. 9101 et seq., places numerous statutory directives on you, including but not limited to carrying out programs of financial assistance [grants] to extend and improve the museum and library services, providing technical support to museums and libraries throughout the country, and annually publishing the results of statutorily required IMLS research, policy analysis, and data collection.⁵ It strains credibility to suggest that you can live up to the immensity of MLSA’s statutory requirements with an entire staff on administrative leave. The communication breakdown on grants suggests that IMLS is already failing to meet the statutory requirements Congress has placed on it.

IMLS has a legal responsibility to continue administering all grants authorized and appropriated by Congress, and I urge you to take this responsibility seriously, and others mandated under MLSA. The Committee on Education and Workforce has oversight responsibilities over all agencies within our jurisdiction, including IMLS. I request your responses to the following by no later than Friday, April 11, 2025:

1. Please provide a full, unredacted copy of the report submitted to the Director of OMB on March 21 as required by Executive Order 14238.
2. Provide all analyses and justifications that went into determining which components and functions of IMLS were deemed statutory and non-statutory in the development of the aforementioned report.
3. Provide a list, including name, title, and contact information of all individuals within IMLS and throughout the executive branch that were involved in any decision-making or drafting of the report.
4. Please provide a list of all terminated grant awards and all communications to grant recipients regarding such terminations.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Andrew Limbong, Entire staff at federal agency that funds libraries and museums put on leave, NPR (Mar. 31, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/31/nx-s1-5334415/doge-institute-of-museum-and-library-services>. ⁵ *E.g.*, 20 U.S.C. §§ 9103, 9108 (“The Director shall...”).

5. Provide all documents and communications since January 20, 2025, including messages on any digital communication platforms, about any staffing or program changes to IMLS, including:
 - a. The report submitted to OMB;
 - b. Any delays or changes to grant application timelines;
 - c. All revisions to grant application details or requirements based on any directive from President Trump regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; and
 - d. All staff reduction decisions.
6. How many employees are expected to remain at the agency following the implementation of the Executive Order?
7. How will IMLS ensure that any mass reduction in staff or directives from the President will not impact the agency's ability to execute its statutory requirements?
8. For all offices within IMLS, please provide the number of staff who have departed from the agency since January 20, 2025 as a result of being placed on administrative leave or any other decisions made by policy staff.
 - a. Please disaggregate staff departures based on the nature of their separation and their office.
9. Please schedule a briefing on these matters with my staff no later than April 11, 2025.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member



ALMA ADAMS, PhD
Ranking Member, Higher Education and
Workforce Development Subcommittee