

Written Statement of **Christopher Eanes, President and CEO, Chorus America**

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives

Testimony for FY2026 Funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)
April 4, 2025

Chair Mike Simpson, Ranking Member Chellie Pingree, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. On behalf of Chorus America and our 6,000 members, **we urge your committee to continue bipartisan support and allocate at least \$209 million for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the FY 2026 Interior Appropriations bill.** Further, we urge you to build a path to index **funding for the NEA at \$1 per capita**, an increase from the current 61 cents per capita.

Chorus America's mission is to strengthen singing communities with the advocacy, connections, and resources they need to be a vital part of society. **Chorus America serves more than 6,000 choruses, individuals, businesses, and organizations.** The Chorus Impact Study, *Singing for a Lifetime*, released in June 2019, shows that choral singing in America is stronger than ever, with more than **54 million Americans singing in choruses.** The percentage of Americans singing has also risen over the past decade, up to 17% from 14% in 2008.

The NEA: America's Lead Supporter of the Arts

- The NEA plays a unique role in broadening access to the cultural, educational, and economic benefits of the arts in every Congressional District. **The arts boost economic productivity, improve education outcomes, foster civic cohesion, facilitate good health, and preserve our cherished heritage and traditions.**
- The NEA's impact goes beyond grantmaking. **It supports community projects and local jobs, spurs creativity and innovation, and conducts important national data collection and research about arts participation.** The NEA is the federal agency primarily responsible for representing a \$151.7 billion nonprofit arts and culture industry. As the largest public funder of the arts and a leader in arts education in the United States, the **NEA reaches communities often underserved by private dollars, and its awards generate support from other sources, including private foundations, corporate donors, and individual contributors.**

The NEA is an extraordinary example of effective bipartisan federal leadership and partnership at the state, regional and local level

- The NEA awards 60% of its grantmaking budget to arts organizations and **40% to state and regional arts agencies.**

- It annually makes about 2,300 grants, **benefiting every Congressional District**. The majority of grants go to small and medium-sized organizations (budgets less than \$2 million) and support projects that increase audience access to arts programming.
- **35% of NEA grants take place in high-poverty urban and rural communities.** Approximately 4,000 communities of all sizes are served each year through NEA grants, with many projects bringing the arts to geographically underserved areas.
- **Around 41 million Americans annually attend live arts events supported by the NEA,** including approximately 36,000 concerts, readings, and performances, and 6,000 exhibitions. Millions more attend these events and access other artistic and educational experiences online.
- Federal agencies and nonprofit organizations partner with the NEA on national initiatives, using the arts as a platform for enhancing the quality of life for all. Such partnership examples include: **Creative Forces, Shakespeare in American Communities, Blue Star Museums, NEA Big Read, Poetry Out Loud, and the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design.**
- The NEA is an integral part of the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, serving on the nonpartisan U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission Task Force and offering grantmaking support for this initiative across the nation.

THE NEA PROVIDES A HIGH RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- The ratio of private and other public funds far surpasses the required non-federal match of at least 1:1. **More than \$500 million annually has been generated in matching support,** illustrating why federal support for the arts is uniquely valuable. NEA funding is a critical backbone of support that leverages state and local investment in the arts.
- The Bureau of Economic Analysis and the NEA together calculate the arts and culture sector's contributions to the gross domestic product. In 2023, arts and culture added over \$1.2 trillion, or 4.2% to national GDP. The arts are also a powerful export industry boasting a trade surplus of \$37 billion in 2023.
- The real value added by arts and culture (i.e., in inflation-adjusted dollars) has doubled over a 25-year period. As in previous years, in 2023, **the arts added more to U.S. GDP than did the sectors of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; mining; outdoor recreation; and transportation and warehousing.**
- Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) is an economic and social impact study of the nation's nonprofit arts and culture industry. Nationally, the sector generated \$151.7 billion of economic activity in 2022—\$73.3 billion in spending by nonprofit arts and

culture organizations and an additional \$78.4 billion in event-related expenditures by their audiences. **This economic activity supported 2.6 million jobs, provided \$101 billion in personal income to residents, and generated \$29.1 billion in tax revenue to local, state, and federal governments.**

NEA & the State Arts Agency Grants at Work in the Choral Community

The choral community receives vital support from the **National Endowment for the Arts and from the network of State Arts Agencies, which help distribute NEA dollars. A few grant highlights include:**

- Caritas Chorale in **Ketchum, Idaho** received \$3,796 for FY25 from the Idaho Commission on the Arts.
- Choral Art Society in **Portland, ME**, received up to \$7,500 in FY24 from the Maine Arts Commission.
- International Choral Festival, **Missoula, MT**, received \$4,000 in FY22-23 from the Montana Arts Council.
- VocalEssence in **Minneapolis, MN** received \$35,000 in FY25 from the NEA.
- Los Angeles Master Chorale in **Los Angeles, CA** received \$45,000 from the NEA in FY24.

The NEA Broadens Arts Participation for All Americans

- Congress directs the NEA to ensure that priority is given to providing services or awarding assistance for projects, productions, workshops, or programs that expand arts participation by underserved populations. Moreover, **a significant percentage of grants benefit those who have fewer opportunities to participate in the arts by offering free or reduced-price performances and programming specifically serving students in urban and rural schools.**
- The **NEA supports military families through its Creative Forces program**, a collaboration with the **Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs** to serve the unique and special needs of military patients and veterans diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and psychological health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Since 2022, the Creative Forces initiative has awarded more than 100 Creative Forces Community Engagement grants to fund nonclinical art programs **for active military members, veterans, reservists, and family/caregivers across the nation**, including in Anchorage, AK; Lemmon, SD; and Hillsboro, WV.
- The **NEA also makes additional investments to support Native arts and culture by providing grants to Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities** and organizations for a wide range of arts activities, from traditional to contemporary arts. Working with Native-led national service organizations and an interagency federal working group, the NEA has carried out strategic outreach to Native communities and artists since 2016 and works in consultation with federally recognized tribes.

- With data showing the growth of **America's aging population** (from 13.1% to 16.9% in the past decade), the NEA is promoting positive physical and mental health outcomes by supporting creative aging projects and wellness programs that teach traditional arts knowledge to the next generation.
- The NEA funds projects that **help children and youth acquire knowledge and skills** in the arts and apply the arts to learning in other subjects. It also supports educational programs for adults, collaborations between state arts agencies and state education agencies, and partnerships between arts institutions and K-12 and college and university educators.

About Chorus America

Chorus America is shaped around its guiding principles of Singing Together, Collective Action, Service & Learning in Community, and Transparency and Modeling Successful Practice. Chorus America is governed by a board of accomplished arts leaders from across the U.S. and the executive staff is headquartered in Washington DC. Chorus America was founded as the Association of Professional Vocal Ensembles in 1977 to gain recognition for professional choruses and today represents hundreds of choruses of every kind throughout U.S. and beyond. We value singing and believe in the potential of singing together—and the love of singing—to build bridges of understanding and empathy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. We appreciate your leadership and service to our county.