



# VERMONT HUMANITIES

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February 10, 2023

Hon. Rep. Diane Lanpher, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: B.812 Vermont Humanities Council

Dear Rep. Lanpher and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for supporting public humanities engagement in every corner of the state through the annual appropriations process. The legislature's support means we can continue to strengthen our existing work while also expanding our impact with new and innovative approaches to programming and grantmaking. Your annual appropriation impacts every county and just about every district in the state and ensures that our cultural infrastructure remains vital and strong.

Attached is the program summary for Vermont's Fiscal Year 2022 submitted to the Governor's office as they were preparing their budget proposal for FY2024. We are grateful to Governor Scott for proposing small increases in our appropriation over the last three years after many years of level funding. That said, we are requesting that the Committee consider a somewhat larger increase in the base appropriation for this year, to \$300,000, in order to support local communities with increased grant and program support.

This request is part of a package of modest proposals that the creative sector is proposing this year. While the dollar amounts are relatively small, the collective impact is significant. The three proposals include:

- Providing \$150K in funding support to the Vermont Arts Council for the implementation of the [Create VT Action Plan](#).
- Increasing the statutory appropriation for the Art in State Buildings section of the capital bill from \$50,000 to \$75,000.
- Increasing the base appropriation for Vermont Humanities to \$300,000.

Since we last reported to the committee, we have continued to strengthen our programs. Our Vermont Reads work continues currently with *El viaje más caro / The Most Costly Journey*, a graphic novel based on the stories of Vermont migrant farm workers. To date, Vermont Humanities has distributed more copies of the book than in any other Vermont Reads program year and we are close to having a record number of community programs – over 85 Vermont communities are currently running local programs.

We returned to in-person events for a reimagined October 2022 Fall Festival. Instead of a single location over two days, we spread the festival events all over the state throughout the month of October. The new format reached more Vermonters than ever, with almost 6,000 people engaging in live and streaming programs across the state.

Direct community investments through regular (non-Covid) grantmaking and other partnerships exceeded \$300,000 in 2022, a six-fold increase from pre-pandemic levels, reflecting the urgent need

for continued direct financial support to Vermont's vibrant cultural sector as it continues to re-build after the shutdowns of 2020 and 2021.

And of course, we would be remiss if we didn't thank the legislature for their tremendous one-time appropriation of \$9 million in 2022 for Cultural Recovery Grants managed through the Vermont Arts Council. At Vermont Humanities, we appreciate the legislature's clear intent that Vermont's humanities infrastructure (museums, historical societies, cultural and community organizations, etc.) be included in this program as part of the broader creative sector. We have worked closely with the Arts Council to ensure that our stakeholders have access to this funding.

It's important to note that most Covid-recovery programs, including the Cultural Recovery Grants, will sunset by the end of Vermont's FY2023. Our request for modest increased funding in FY2024 will help provide a softer landing for some of our key partners in local communities.

The Vermont Legislature has understood the importance of the humanities for many years, and we value your continued partnership. Through the humanities, we can achieve a better understanding of the past, a stronger analysis of the present, and a more hopeful vision for the future.

With this modest investment, we design and facilitate experiences for Vermonters of all ages to bridge distance and difference, offering programming that shares and preserves the stories of people and places across our region and delves into what it means to live in community together. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup  
Executive Director