

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2021

Chairman Peter A. DeFazio
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2167 Rayburn House Office Building
45 Independence Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Peter A. DeFazio,

Thank you for your leadership and vision as you and your Committee advance critically needed infrastructure investments. As members of the House Appropriations Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Subcommittee and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, we recognize both the significant need for substantial infrastructure investment and the significant challenges in delivering for the American people, and we look forward to working with you, as we did in last Congress' Moving Forward Act.

As the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure considers the core elements within an infrastructure package in line with President Biden's stated vision, we ask you to prioritize targeted resources to support our nation's museums, as well as accredited aquariums and zoos, in addressing their critical infrastructure needs, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. These institutions, located across the country in thousands of cities and towns, represent our cultural heritage and are social, economic, and educational pillars of our communities.

Museums, aquariums, and zoos are key partners with cities, states, and the federal government as we work together to build a more sustainable and equitable future. These institutions are national treasures- serving as centers of conservation and research, while also helping to educate and inspire future generations.

The nation's museums, aquariums, and zoos have faced an unprecedented economic crisis which has impacted their ability to maintain critical operations and modernize aging and historic infrastructure. The fiscal health of zoos and aquariums has been especially hard hit by the impacts of COVID-19. Unlike many other business entities, they cannot simply cut overhead costs and close their doors. They must provide daily, ongoing care and feeding for hundreds of thousands of animals. Many institutions are absorbing monthly operating losses that in some cases run into the millions of dollars.

It is with this in mind that we believe the need to provide cultural institutions with expanded federal support is especially important. Providing resources to modernize infrastructure and install renewable, energy efficient improvements will not only enhance aging facilities but will allow institutions to incorporate sustainability into their educational programming and community

engagement work, in addition to creating jobs while reducing carbon emissions and catalyzing broader community mobilization to accelerate climate action.

As it builds an infrastructure bill sufficient to meet national need, we urge the Committee to prioritize resources to support our museums, zoos and aquariums to address their critical infrastructure needs.

We appreciate the tremendous work your Committee has done thus far, and we look forward to serving as a partner, both on Committee and on the Appropriations Committee, as you continue this important work. We thank you for your willingness to consider the unique needs of our nation's vital cultural institutions.

Sincerely,



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" Garcia
Member of Congress