June 2, 2020

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
2007 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

PRESERVATION CREATES JOBS:  
Opportunities to Catalyze Economic Recovery with the Historic Preservation Fund

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a privately-funded nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949. We work to save America’s historic places to enrich our future.

As Congress considers additional investments to catalyze economic recovery, we urge you to provide supplemental funding of $420 million for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). This request was included in an April 30 letter to Congress from the National Trust and 379 other preservation organizations and businesses (attached).

Our request includes funding of $30 million for State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), $15 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), and $75 million for SHPOs to allocate among the nation’s 2,000 Certified Local Governments. We also support $300 million for four competitive grant programs within the HPF: African American Civil Rights Grants (including its FY20 expansion for civil rights of All Americans), Historically Black Colleges and Universities Grants, Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants, and the Save America’s Treasures program.

We have recently completed what we believe to be the first analysis of the bricks and mortar rehabilitation awards provided by these competitive grant programs. These programs have received broad and increasing levels of support because they invest in places that tell the stories of all Americans.

The grant programs also support many rehabilitation projects, which create preservation-related jobs and invest in local communities. Historic rehabilitation projects are generally well-paid, blue-collar jobs. Rehabilitation projects also tend to be more labor intensive than new construction, so work restoring historic buildings has a greater job creating impact per dollar
spent than new construction. In addition, seventy-five percent of the economic benefits of these projects stay on the ground, in state and local economies.¹

These programs have become essential elements of preserving the infrastructure of our nation’s historic and cultural resources. The current economic crisis provides an opportunity to catalyze the economic and job-related benefits of historic rehabilitation and related resource programs.

**Historic Preservation Fund: A Record of Success in Local Historic Rehabilitation Projects**

We support supplemental funding of $75 million for each of these existing and successful HPF programs:

**African American Civil Rights Grant Program**
Between FY16 and FY19, Congress appropriated $48,500,000 to the African American Civil Rights grant program. That funding has supported 185 projects in 33 states and the District of Columbia that tell the stories and preserve the places of the twentieth-century civil rights movement. **Significantly, 87% of awarded funds, totaling $40,895,212, supported bricks and mortar, job-creating projects.** Among the iconic properties that have been rehabilitated with these grants are:

- Alabama’s 16th Street Baptist Church ($2,000,000 over 4 years);
- Arkansas’s Little Rock Central High School ($1,498,000 over 3 years);
- Kentucky’s Quinn Chapel AME Church;
- Michigan’s Detroit Urban League Headquarters;
- Mississippi’s Tallahatchie County Courthouse;
- New Jersey’s Hinchliffe Stadium;
- North Carolina’s Pauli Murray Home;
- Tennessee’s Clayborn Temple ($900,000 over 2 years); and
- Virginia’s Third Street Bethel AME Church in Richmond ($905,000 over 2 years).

In FY20, Congress provided a record $18,000,000 for this program, including $2,500,000 to expand the program to preserve the sites and stories associate with securing civil rights for All Americans, including women, Latino, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and LGBTQ Americans. FY20 grants have not yet been awarded.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities Grant Program**
In FY17, Congress renewed its commitment to preservation projects at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and appropriated $16,300,000 between FY17 and FY19. **All of these awards have gone to support bricks and mortar, job-creating projects.** Among the 37 recipients have been:

- District of Columbia’s Howard University’s Founders Library;
- Georgia’s Spelman College;

¹ Two reports describe well the benefits of historic rehabilitation projects to local communities: “The Federal Historic Tax Credit: Transforming Communities,” prepared for the National Trust for Historic Preservation by PlaceEconomics (2014); and “Twenty-four Reasons Historic Preservation is Good for Your Community,” PlaceEconomics (2020).
Mississippi’s Tougaloo College;
South Carolina State University; and
Tennessee’s Fisk University.

Significantly, when Congress enacted the 2009 Recovery Act it appropriated $15,000,000 for HBCU preservation grants (21 projects received funding). Previously, between FY95 and FY06, Congress appropriated $44,354,000 to fund rehabilitation projects on HBCU campuses. Between FY95 and FY19, a cumulative $88,368,000 in funding has benefited nearly 190 projects in 19 states and the District of Columbia. FY20 grants have not yet been awarded.

Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants
In FY18, due to the leadership of Senator Patrick Leahy, Congress created a new grants program, now named Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants. The program, based upon the highly successful Vermont Village Revitalization Initiative, received $17,500,000 in FY18 through FY20 to revive historic properties in rural communities throughout the nation. In its first year of funding, $5 million in grants were awarded to 9 organizations, including the National Main Street Center, to support the preservation of multiple buildings in rural communities in 13 states, including Alaska, Louisiana, Maine, Montana, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia, and also to the National Main Street Center. Grantees are now regranting funds to smaller, community-based rehabilitation projects. The National Main Street Center, for instance, has already awarded subgrants to communities in Kentucky, New Mexico, Wyoming, and North Carolina. All of these projects are bricks and mortar, job-creating projects. FY19 and FY20 grants have not yet been awarded.

Save America’s Treasures
Finally, another storied grant program, Save America’s Treasures, has funded bricks and mortar projects, as well as preservation and conservation work for collections, including artifacts, museum collections, documents, and works of art in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Midway Island.

In FY17, the program was revived, due to the strong leadership of Congresswoman Betty McCollum. Congress appropriated $18,000,000 in FY17 and FY18, supporting a total of 57 grants, including 36 grants for preservation projects. A total of $12,508,837, or 72% of the awarded funding, have gone to bricks and mortar, job-creating projects in 27 states and the District of Columbia. The remainder of the funding conserved museum collections and objects. FY19 and FY20 grants have not yet been awarded. Several recent bricks and mortar projects include:

- California’s Frank Lloyd Wright designed Hollyhock /Aline Barnsdall Complex;
- Maine’s Olson House (site of Andrew Wyeth’s iconic “Christina’s World”);
- Mississippi’s Isaiah T. Montgomery House;
- Nebraska’s Willa Cather’s Childhood Home;
- Ohio’s James A. Garfield Memorial and Free Labor Store/Benjamin Lundy House;
- Virginia’s Petersbourg Exchange Building; and
- Wisconsin’s National Soldiers Home Residences (“Old Main”).
Between FY99 and FY10, the program awarded $315,317,598 to 1,269 projects in the form of both competitive grants and Congressionally designated projects. Early awards included bricks and mortar projects at:

- Alaska’s Sitka Pioneer Home and Holy Assumption Orthodox Church;
- Minnesota’s Fort Snelling;
- New Mexico’s Acoma Pueblo and Manhattan Project Buildings;
- Nevada’s Indian Boarding School;
- New York’s Susan B. Anthony House, Harriet Tubman Historic Sites, and what is now the Lower East Side Tenement Museum;
- Ohio’s Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Home;
- Rhode Island’s Southeast Lighthouse; and
- Washington D.C.’s Sewell-Belmont House (now the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument).

These competitive grant programs are not only important to protecting and preserving our nation’s history, but also to creating jobs and supporting local communities. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee to advance these job-creating programs.

Please do not hesitate to communicate with me if you have any questions.

Best,

Thomas J. Cassidy, Jr.
Vice President of Government Relations
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee (with attachment)