**TEMPLATE: A letter to advocate for the inclusion of science centers and museums in COVID-19 relief efforts**

March 17, 2020 | For updates, check www.astc.org/coronavirus/advocacy

*Use this language as a template for letters and messages sent to elected officials and other stakeholders. Feel free to edit or cut text as needed. Email us at* *info@astc.org* *with suggestions for additional advocacy and communications resources.*

Dear [name of elected official],

[Name of institution]’s mission is to [your mission], and we are one of thousands of nonprofit organizations throughout the United States that engage and educate the public on issues of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). I am writing today to ask for your support toward relief for museums and other nonprofit institutions like ours from the economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every year, more than [annual visits] people per year visit our institution and participate in our public programming. We employ more than [number of employees] full- and part-time staff. [Add “Museums as Economic Engines Data”]

Like many museums, science and technology centers, and nonprofit organizations around the country, [your institution] has had to close to the public. We have also had to cancel [insert specific examples].

Closure has a severe impact on our ability to weather the current crisis, as we are heavily dependent on earned revenue—which includes admission revenue, education and program fees, memberships, and facilities rentals—to deliver on our mission. Closure causes significant local economic impact, risking the employment of part-time and full-time staff, and causing the cancellation of contracts and vendor relationships.

Similar to most nonprofit organizations, we have limited financial reserves and are not able to continue to pay staff if revenue remains decreased or our usual funding sources are eliminated—even in the short term. Personnel expenses make up [proportional amount, e.g. 50 percent] of our institution’s budget. In addition, as a place-based institution reliant on interaction with large public audiences, many of our full- and part-time staff are not in a position to telework and will likely have to be furloughed or, worse, their positions eliminated.

Further, the COVID-19 pandemic comes at an especially inopportune time, as spring and summer tend to be the most active times of year for our institution. During these months, we typically build up cash reserves to carry us through the slower periods of the year.

Right now, we are [insert example of positive contribution to the community]. We are glad to make these contributions to the community, and to continue to serve are members in this small way. These activities, however, are not sustainable without emergency relief funds.

Therefore, we respectfully request that museums and other cultural organizations—including science and technology centers and museums, children’s museums, natural history museums, nature centers, aquariums, zoos, planetariums, public and botanic gardens, arboreta, and other museums with major programming in the sciences—are included in any legislation relevant to the current COVID-19 coronavirus disease outbreak. By ensuring that these types of nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for emergency funds, you will enable them to continue being trusted sources for information, innovative STEM education and engagement, now and in the future.

As employers, we also request that legislation include immediate economic relief for individuals who may be furloughed or whose positions may be eliminated during this challenging economic time.

As a nonprofit institution, we also request your consideration of the specific recommendations put forward by the National Council on Nonprofits to ensure that nonprofits can continue to support the needs and priorities of communities all across the country, at this time when so many are in need. We also request that in any relief for small business, you consider small nonprofits as well, given how many museums and other science-engagement institutions operate with limited operating budgets and staffing.

Both the recovery of our nation from this emergency—and longer-term efforts to advance public health and scientific research to prevent and minimize the impact of future similar events—depend upon a public that is engaged with scientific issues and students who are excited about pursuing STEM careers. Our institution is critical to this future, and we urge you to ensure that community-based organizations like ours remain vibrant and able to resume their mission to engage, inspire, and increase public understanding of the science that underpins successful responses to crises such as pandemics.

Sincerely,