Dear **(Recipient’s Title and Name):**

As a constituent living in **<<Your City/Town Name>>,** and a strong supporter of the **<<Your Museum's Name>>**'s, I want to share with you the positive impact of Illinois museums on our state, and the unique challenges our institutions are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The **<<Your Museum’s Name>>** is one of more than 1,000 museums in Illinois that serve as important cornerstones of our communities. Our museums are economic engines and cultural attractions, which:

* have a total economic impact in excess of $2.6 billion a year
* attract more than 22 million visitors a year—more than all of Chicago’s professional sports teams combined
* educate more than 2.8 million school children annually
* serve as cultural anchors in our communities, benefitting nearby restaurants and businesses

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to negatively impact our industry, and Illinois museums face some of the gravest challenges since the Great Depression. In fact:

* Two years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, three quarters of museums are still reporting significant decreases in income, with an average decrease of 40%
* Despite attempts to provide relief to the industry, 15% of museums still report a significant risk of closure
* Nearly half of all museums have had to reduce staff, with 44% reporting they are unable to rehire in the coming year
* On-site school field trips to museums, a key point of connection between museums and children, have dried up due to current COVID-19 restrictions
* Additional revenue streams, such as sponsorships, site rentals and charitable gifts, have diminished as well

Despite these challenges, museums have made tremendous efforts to provide online and distance learning opportunities for families sheltering in place. Our industry has stayed connected to students through virtual field trips and provided much needed educational content for audiences starved for cultural enrichment. However, we need support to help bridge the return to full, in-person visitation and overcome the economic challenges of the past two pandemic years. State investment now will help ensure that Illinois museums will continue to play a vital role in our communities.

 **Illinois Priorities for Museums:**

* Support for the appropriation of $100 million from the ARPA State Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency Fund to the Department of Natural Resources for grants to public museums
* Funding for the Public Museum Capital Grant Program for Fiscal Year 2023 in the amount of $50 million
* Lifting of restrictions on matching requirements for state grant applicants
* Reinstatement of funding for the Illinois Association of Museums for Fiscal Year 2023 in the amount of $350,000, so that we can provide critical resources to our museum community
* Support for the *Illinois Creative Future Fund*, which includes $50 million in grants for Illinois museums
* Continued support for the Illinois Arts Council, Illinois Humanities and Illinois Office of Tourism

**<<At Our Museum:** **(add your story here.) >>**

I urge you to support legislative efforts to robustly fund museums during the COVID-19 crisis. Museums serve as a vital part of our nation's educational infrastructure, and are critical in the economic recovery of our region. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and please let me know if I can provide any additional information about my museum's role in the health of our community.

Sincerely,
**<<Your Name>>**