

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2014

Ms. Joan Shigekawa
Acting Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20506-0001

Re: Support for Charles Town, WV Our Town Initiative

Dear Chairman Shigekawa:

We write the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to convey our strong and unified support for the grant application submitted by Charles Town, West Virginia to establish a “Washington Heritage Arts & Cultural District.”

Charles Town is a city whose history is closely intertwined with our country’s founding, and has served as a gateway for many of the visitors to our state. In particular, the City is the focus of a rich Washington Family heritage that brings in visitors from around the country. The city is named and was laid out by George Washington’s brother, Charles, and is located on the Washington Heritage Trail national scenic byway, and is the home to dozens of historic homes, sites and stories related to the founding family. The City’s plan to accentuate that history while promoting local arts and artists is a clear sign of the emphasis that the community places on the arts. With over a dozen different arts groups and programs in a community of 5,000, Charles Town has done an exceptional job of cultivating the arts and building strong relationships with their local partners, including the Arts and Humanities Alliance of Jefferson County.

Even though these arts and heritage tourism assets are perfectly located within the City’s core walkable area, the arts community lacks a sense of cohesion and identification. A partnership with NEA to create a cultural district plan for the “Washington Heritage Arts and Cultural District” will create the type vibrant arts and cultural tourism district that is all too often lacking in rural communities. Through this partnership, these assets will be woven into a more cohesive community arts district that better connects the downtown area with its arts and cultural assets.

We believe that Charles Town's proposed Washington Heritage Arts and Cultural District is an excellent opportunity for NEA to work with a community as it strategically shapes its physical and social character around the arts, and we urge you to make it a priority for grant funding.

Sincerely,



John D. Rockefeller, IV
United States Senator



Joe Manchin, III
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
Member of Congress

CC: Director Jason Schupbach