

November 27, 2007

The Honorable Eliot Spitzer
Governor
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Manuel Rivera, Ph.D.
Deputy Secretary for Education
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer:

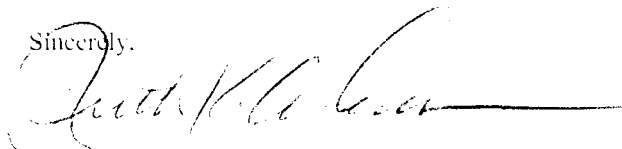
I am writing to you on behalf of The Gomez Foundation for Mill House and the 1,045 museums and historical organizations across the state that annually provide exceptional educational programs to 6.6 million schoolchildren – without benefit of any State Education Department funding support – to urge you to include in your Executive Budget \$30 million to support the Cultural Education and Museum Act.

The Act provides formula-based funding to museums and historical societies that offer verifiable, standards-based educational programming to K-12 schoolchildren, along with competitive grant programs that promote science and technology literacy and collaborations with performing arts organizations. The Act also addresses much-needed longitudinal evaluation of the educational effectiveness of the museum-based educational programming.

For the past 11 years, the Gomez Mill House has hosted site visits for approximately 1,200 third grade students each year from the Newburgh school system and about 400 other children from nearby school systems in the Hudson Valley. These educational visits fulfill, in part, the local history experience required by New York State of all public schools. Our tour of the Gomez Mill House -- the oldest standing Jewish dwelling in North America (dating to 1714 and the Colonial Jewish merchants of New York) and later home to a Revolutionary War patriot Wolfert Acker, a gentleman farmer William Henry Armstrong, the renowned Arts and Crafts paper historian and papermaker Dard Hunter, and the social activist (suffragette and civil rights author) Margaret Gruening, -- provides a microcosm of New York State and American history and an introduction to the philosophy and social concerns that have defined America since its founding. The children enthusiastically respond to the tour, to the hands on experience of papermaking, and to the simplified, yet complex issues of diversity represented in our exhibits and our history. And, when they move on to the 4th grade, they often encourage the next class of third graders to choose us for their site visit, as well.

We are a small institution with no private support for this program. Each year it gets harder to underwrite the cost of staff and materials, yet we've maintained this program to the detriment of other site needs because we believe in its mission to educate children in our local area to the diverse history of the region and to the specific history of our site. The Cultural Education and Museum Act would provide an opportunity to help us defray the rising costs without cutting the program's outreach. Again, we urge you to include in your Executive Budget the \$30 million for the Cultural Education and Museum Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ruth K. Abrahams', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Ruth K. Abrahams, Ph.D.
Executive Director