

As Director of the Museum Association of New York, I am writing on behalf of 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 Governor Spitzer’s Executive Budget \$30 million to support the Cultural Education and Museum Act.

The Act provides formula-based funding to chartered museums and historical societies that offer verifiable, standards-based educational programming to K-12 schoolchildren. The Act will help these educational institutions deliver hands-on learning in settings that communicate social, cultural and scientific information, and improve attitudes and cognitive skills as well as develop the whole child using the “authentic object”.

In addition, the Act will strengthen and expand educational opportunities using the arts, sciences and the humanities for millions of schoolchildren across the state, especially those from inner city and rural schools that depend heavily on museums to enrich their curricula.

The Museum Association of New York (MANY) is a nonprofit professional organization promoting excellence in museum leadership and governance. MANY has invested more than five years of effort with the State Education Department to strengthen standards and accountability for chartered museums and historical organizations. The Cultural and Museum Education Act is the result of this work, representing one of the Regents major initiatives in the Department’s 2008-09 budget proposal.

During these budget hearings you have received oral and written testimony from a variety of museums across the state. These institutions – and hundreds more – take seriously the educational mission the State Education Department gave them in their charters. Recognition of this work through a formula funding program is long overdue. The Act acknowledges for the first time what educators already know – that museums and historical societies are vitally important to the education of our youth and families.

Sincerely,

Anne W. Ackerson
Director
Museum Association of New York