



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan Announces Increased Funding For New York's Cultural Institutions In State Budget

SEAN M. RYAN April 20, 2022

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SENATOR SEAN RYAN ANNOUNCES INCREASED FUNDING FOR NEW YORK'S CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN STATE BUDGET

Budget Includes \$20 Million in New Funding for Upstate Arts Organizations, 25% Increase for State's Zoos, Botanical Gardens, and Aquariums

BUFFALO – Today, April 20, 2022, New York State Senator Sean Ryan joined representatives from several local arts and cultural organizations at the Buffalo History Museum to announce that the state budget for FY 2022-2023 includes \$20 million in new aid for cultural institutions in Upstate New York, in addition to more than \$40 million in operating aid for these organizations throughout the state. The budget also delivers a 25% increase in capital aid for New York’s zoos, botanical gardens, and aquariums.

In recent decades, New York’s cultural institutions have played a significant role in the state’s booming tourism industry. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, [New York State welcomed a record 265.5 million visitors](#) from around the world. These visitors brought \$73.6 billion in direct spending and generated an economic impact of \$117.6 billion in 2019 alone. As a major driver of tourism to New York State, these institutions’ ability to successfully welcome back patrons and return to normal operations will play a large part in the state’s economic recovery from the pandemic.

The \$20 million of new funding is made up of \$10 million in capital funding and \$10 million in operating aid for cultural institutions outside of New York City. The \$10 million of capital funding will help finance the construction of new facilities, as well as the maintenance, renovation, and expansion of existing facilities. It can be distributed to a wide variety of cultural organizations throughout Upstate New York including museums, theaters, and performing arts centers. The \$10 million of operating aid will help these same types of organizations with expenses associated with day-to-day operations.

The budget also includes a \$20 million capital improvement fund specifically dedicated to zoos, botanical gardens, and aquariums across New York. This represents an increase of \$4 million, or 25%, from last year’s budget allocation. These organizations faced unprecedented challenges as tourism slowed during the pandemic, and this increase in state funding will assist facilities like the Buffalo Zoo, The Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, and the Aquarium of Niagara with critical updates.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “The organizations gathered today make up the bedrock of our local arts community. They and their counterparts throughout the state were hit hard by pandemic but are beginning to rebound from a challenging couple of years. This historic funding of the arts will make essential upgrades possible for our state’s cultural institutions, whose significant role in the state’s tourism industry will make them an important part of New York’s economic recovery from the pandemic.”

Melissa Brown, Executive Director, Buffalo History Museum, said, “The Buffalo History Museum and by extension, the community experienced Senator Ryan’s devoted advocacy in our recent restoration and reactivation of both the Portico and Erie County Galleries. Each advanced a bold re-imagining of the guest experience set forward in the Museum’s new Master Plan. I can assure you that centuries old structures made of stone, brick, and particularly marble – while they look quite permanent – require a practice of consistent care and investment to assure they are safe and continue to rise to the expectations

of a new generation of guests.”

Holly Grant, Grants and Programming Director, Arts Services Inc., said, “On behalf of Arts Services Inc. and the creative industry in Western New York, we thank Senator Ryan for his tremendous support. From the Arts & Economic Prosperity study we conducted in 2017, we know that the arts are a \$352 million economic driver for Western New York. As ASI conducts this study again through 2023, we hope that the new data combined with this increased support will signal to the rest of New York State that the arts are the bedrock which the comeback of this region will be built on.”

Norah Fletchall, President and CEO, Buffalo Zoo, said, “We are incredibly grateful to Senator Ryan for being a champion for zoos in upstate New York. Capital funding provides the rescue we need today to be viable tomorrow and grow in the future. It puts the Buffalo Zoo further down the path to sustainability so we can remain Western New York’s most treasured cultural gem for generations to come.”

Mark Mortenson, President and CEO, Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, said, “The board and staff of the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens we would like to thank Senator Ryan for his commitment to operational and capital funding that is vital to our service to the community. This critical funding helps to support our current programming and expand our services through needed capital improvements.”

Gary Siddall, President & CEO, Aquarium of Niagara, said, “The Aquarium is thrilled to see this investment into the upstate cultural institutions that play such an important role in our community. Operating a living museum presents particular financial challenges — high-quality animal care comes with non-discretionary costs that amplify budgetary expenses. The Aquarium is grateful for this vital funding to help offset those costs, drive our mission, and deliver continual improvements for the residents of Western New York.”

Daniel Hart, Director, Kleinhans Music Hall, said, “We are extremely pleased and grateful to see extra financial support come to Western New York from the State. It comes at a time when the cultural sector is adapting to not only to the effects of the pandemic, but also to the dramatic need for capital investment in our historic venues; therefore, the funds will have an immediate and positive impact on our community.”

Scott Propeack, Acting Director, Burchfield Penney Art Center, said, “New York City is fortunate to be recognized worldwide as a vital cultural center. The effort to make this a state-wide identity begins with support like this at the state level. We are fortunate to have great regional representatives working on our behalf to be heard and supported.”

Michelle Urbanczyk, CEO of Explore & More - The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Children's Museum, said, “The pandemic has been particularly difficult on the region's cultural institutions, who provide a much-needed informal education and reprieve from the stressors of daily life. We are grateful to see an increase in the State allocation for cultural funding; this opportunity will allow us to bring joy and play to our community.”

Chuck Le Fevre, President of Board of Directors, The Graycliff Conservancy, said, “We are thrilled about New York State’s significant investment in the cultural fabric of Western New York. Funding available for both capital projects and operating expenses will help to ensure thorough recovery in the tourism sector after the effects of the pandemic, as well as the continued growth of these important regional assets.”

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