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March 20, 2020

Senator John Thune  
383 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510-0001

Dear Sen. Thune,

I am writing today on behalf of one of our state's most precious resources, the creative sector. The coronavirus has already had a devastating economic impact on America's nonprofit arts sector—financial losses to date are estimated to be \$3.2 billion. Since the first U.S. case was reported on January 20, cancellations and closings have been reported in thousands of communities spanning all 50 states. In an ongoing study over 91% of responding arts organizations indicated they have cancelled one or more events. South Dakotans need your leadership to ensure our artists and vital arts organizations receive immediate, stop-gap relief to make it through the next few months. The Arts are a major attraction to those visiting our state, playing a vital role in the South Dakota tourism industry.

In order to support the sector at this vital time, I am asking you designate a minimum \$4 billion to be distributed through the the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to help offset losses in the nonprofit arts sector and expand eligibility through additional federal programs to ensure artists, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in the creative economy can utilize business interruption relief. Please see the attached letter from Sen. Udall to Leaders McConnell and Schumer outlining the NEA economic relief proposal.

Last and most importantly, I want to thank you for the incredible task of leadership before you. We are fortunate to have such respected and strong South Dakota leaders in the US Senate. Please know I am grateful to you and your families, and your team. If I can be of service at any time, please never hesitate to contact me.

Best Regards,

Jim Speirs  
Executive Director

