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K-12 Schools Scramble for Transportation Grants, Demonstrate Value of Arts & Cultural Programs

\$20,000 program concludes after just 10 days due to overwhelming demand

(LANSING)-----Because demand far exceeded supply, the Michigan Humanities Council and the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) today announced their transportation grants program is closed – just 10 business days after the initial announcement. The Michigan Humanities Council received 69 grant applications requesting more than \$34,000 to help pay for schools to travel to arts and cultural programs or exhibits in Michigan, but the program had only \$20,000 in funds available.

“We were surprised with the requests from schools within such a short timeframe,” stated Jan Fedewa, executive director of the Michigan Humanities Council. “The overwhelming response from schools demonstrates the importance that Michigan educators place on our youth being exposed to quality arts and cultural programs. Schools are in demand of ways to help fund educational opportunities. This should send a message to our lawmakers and stakeholders about how our schools and our communities value arts and culture.”

The transportation grant program provided support to accredited public or private K-12 schools in Michigan with one grant for up to \$500 to attend any Michigan Humanities Council- or MCACA-funded museums, galleries, cultural venues, and programs such as music, dance, theatre performances, and cultural/art exhibits.

The Michigan Humanities Council reported that about two-thirds of the applications were received from schools in three urban areas: metropolitan Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. However, rural schools from across Michigan, and as far north as Harbor Springs, also applied for funding. The vast majority of applications were received from elementary and middle schools, with field trip group sizes ranging from as few as 12 students to as many as 390 students. Awards will be announced in the next two weeks, with the first trip starting as early as October 30.

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“I think the fact that these grants were gone in 10 business days speaks volumes,” said John Bracey, executive director of the MCACA. “We have allowed a situation to grow in this state where the opportunities for our children to experience and participate in quality arts and cultural performances or exhibits are so few compared to 20 years ago. If this problem isn’t addressed soon we will have produced multiple generations with a diminished capacity to think creatively, relate to individuals different than themselves, imagine a different world or create new innovations.”

The Michigan Humanities Council, founded in 1974, is a private, non-profit organization, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities. For additional information, please visit: www.michiganhumanities.org or call 517-372-7770.

The Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs serves to encourage, develop and facilitate an enriched environment of artistic, creative, cultural activity in Michigan. It is a state agency within the Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries.

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