

February 22, 2006

The Honorable Joe Barton
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Room 2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Barton:

As 2006 begins it is clear that a strong consensus is building over the urgent need to modernize America's systems of education, skills training, and lifelong learning through significantly increased investment in research and development. I am writing to urge you to support the funding of the **Digital Opportunity Investment Trust (DO IT) bill HR. 2512**, led by your colleagues Congressmen Regula, Markey, Gillmor, Holt, Wolf and Boucher among others. The mission of the Dallas Museum of Art includes the statement, "We champion the power of art, embracing our responsibility to engage and educate our community, to contribute to cultural knowledge, and to advance creative endeavor." The creation and funding of DO IT will fill a gaping hole in the overall American R&D portfolio, and I firmly believe that American global leadership and the future of our nation's economy depend upon passage of this historic legislation. Our experiences at the Dallas Museum of Art have reaffirmed the understanding that technology is crucial to transforming the educational mission of museums and we are actively seeking funding for educational initiatives that support this belief.

The DO IT bill is modeled on the National Science Foundation legislation and would do for education, workforce training, and lifelong learning what the National Science Foundation does for science, and the National Institutes of Health does for health and medicine. DO IT will provide a mechanism for a federal "venture capital fund" for the research and development of advanced broadband technologies for learning – an investment our competitor nations are already making at a substantially higher level. Through DO IT, teaching and training in all subject areas would be made more effective, efficient and captivating. Technology enables us to customize learning experiences to all ages and learning styles.

Education and training are too vital to our national strength and prosperity to be in a second-class position regarding the benefits of pioneering research and technology. In addition, by creating this Trust and supporting the creation of advanced delivery systems in tandem with conversion of resources to digital formats, our nation's vast educational and

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cultural heritage, housed in museums, libraries, universities and public broadcasting services, will move beyond institutional walls and into the homes, schools and workplaces of even the poorest and most remote areas in the country.

Under DO IT, grants and contracts will be awarded on a competitive basis with the grant making, governance and Congressional accountability structures modeled on the National Science Foundation. Understanding our crucial role in lifelong learning, the Dallas Museum of Art has been engaged in a research and development phase that has culminated in a complete program which is seeking funding along the exact lines that DO IT proposes.

In 2004 the Dallas Museum of Art secured initial funding for planning new programs and the corresponding improvements in our building. We have just completed that planning process that places education at the center of the Museum's future activities. This vision has been enthusiastically and unanimously endorsed by the Education and Executive Committees of our Board of Trustees and by the full Board during meetings in the fall of 2005. It calls for new resources of \$40 million for education endowment and \$5 million for building renovations and enhancements to support a major new initiative in educational technologies. We propose to deliver the Museum's future education programs through a completely integrated plan founded upon two key components: the *Center for Creativity*, which is dedicated to the creation of rich new programs and the transformation of spaces used for education, and the *Arts Network*, comprising the entire technology infrastructure and programing related to education and art. Innovation will be a hallmark of the *Center for Creativity* and the *Arts Network*. According to Kathy Halbriech, Director of the Walker Art Center: "Out of risks come real innovations. Play it safe and nothing much happens." The creation of DO IT would allow institutions, such as the Dallas Museum of Art, to apply for funds which would bridge the gap between raising these critical endowment funds and starting our programs today. The speed at which technology advances adds an urgency to our mission - yours and ours. We can wait no longer for this funding to take place at the federal level.

As evidenced by the 2004 Council on Library and Information Resources report, *Business planning for cultural heritage institutions : a framework and resource guide to assist cultural heritage institutions with business planning for sustainability of digital asset management programs*, a secure income source must be in place for a program to be successful. In many cases, digital projects are not successful because they are viewed by funders as complete products, rather than as an integrated approach to the overall mission of the institution. Funds are raised for one-time use based solely on program content or a unique product. While useful for a short time, these products have proven unsustainable and many institutions who received funding during the early years have had to abandon their digital programs for lack of

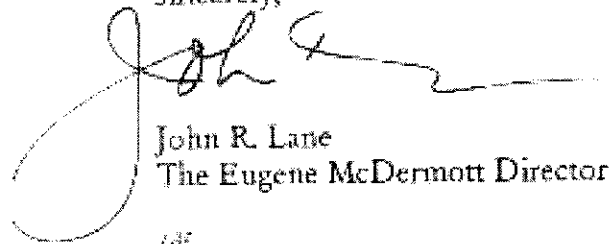
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fundamental cultural shift that is unique to the DMA. It has changed how the Museum staff operates since it requires all departments to work together to create exciting and engaging experiences for our visitors. *LoEA* will continue to serve as a significant planning tool for all education, exhibition, marketing and visitor services programs. We are copyrighting and trademarking "*Levels of Engagement with Art*" as a unique intellectual property developed by the DMA. We are also committed to conducting additional research and to sharing it with our colleagues in the field.

The realization of our goals will change not only the visitors' experiences at the Dallas Museum of Art but ultimately the way museums around the world approach lifelong learning and the successful engagement of their audiences with art. It is this type of research and prototype development that DO IT can and should support.

You are in a unique position to wield leadership on this issue. I hope you will do so by adding your support to HR 2512 at the earliest possible moment. I am available to speak further on this subject if you or your staff has additional questions. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing your positive response.

Sincerely,



John R. Lane
The Eugene McDermott Director

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