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Case Statement for Public Support of the Humanities

At the core of civilization—at the heart of the search for solutions to challenges and the harvesting of opportunities—lies the quest for understanding, learning about and valuing what it is that makes each of us special.

The Michigan Humanities Council is the leading advocate of that core principle in Michigan. For more than 40 years, through its programs and services, the council has worked to bring together people in all 83 counties of the state to communicate their thoughts, air opinions, express differences and seek common ground for the common good.

Each year, the staff of the council and its volunteer board uses funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs, corporate donors and individual citizens to support hundreds of events that help more than 1.5 million people, including 50,000 or more students, better understand themselves, their neighbors and the world around them. These events include cultural projects, historical displays, literature, work with veterans and reading projects for libraries and families.

There are sound economic reasons for society, and you, to support humanities programs. Corporations are increasingly global. Their employees are more and more likely to move to our towns from other geographies, bringing with them traditions, languages, and sensitivities. Work teams depend on communication and understanding as engineers, marketers, accountants and administrators from disparate cultures innovate together. To attract the world's best thinkers and their families, Michigan must open their hearts to newcomers and their differences—aptitudes sharpened by the humanities.

A vibrant democracy demands engagement; our liberties depend on it. Participation in democratic institutions has withered in recent decades. Voting, the attractiveness of seeking public office, and informed debate on crucial issues has declined in recent years. The humanities enhance wisdom and encourage interest in the workings of self-government while fostering appreciation of the lessons of history and providing context for civil discourse.

Variety, an open mind, and good ideas enrich our quality of life. They spring from the lifeblood of the humanities: reading, thinking, discussion, art, food, style, film, music, fashion, languages, literature, architecture, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archaeology, religion, ethics and criticism. The humanities are the framework for sharing the best of what each of us have to offer and for appreciating how alike we humans are.

About the Michigan Humanities Council

The Michigan Humanities Council is a private, nonprofit organization created to foster a better understanding of each other and our state through local cultural, historical and literary experiences for all. The Council was founded in 1974 and is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and individual donors. For more information on future programs, upcoming grant opportunities or how you can support these efforts, please visit www.michiganhumanities.org or call (517) 372-7770.