



May 23, 2024

Hon. Charles (Chuck) Sams
Director, National Park Service

Shannon Estenoz
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife
and Parks, US Department of the Interior

via email

RE: Operational needs of State Historic Preservation Offices FY25/FY26

Dear Director Sams and Asst. Secretary Estenoz,

I write today in appreciation of your work on behalf of the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the National Park Service (NPS), and to provide you background on the vital work of our national network of 59 State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). It is our pleasure to work in partnership with DOI through the NPS not only to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, but also to preserve and elevate the shared history and experiences of all Americans. To continue our work, we ask for your support for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) funding required to fulfill our shared duties and obligations.

NCSHPO recognizes that the topic of spending remains a challenge Congressionally. While we appreciate our SHPOs did not see a reduction of HPF funding appropriations for FY 2024, we want to underscore that flat funding is in essence a cut when factoring in rising costs and unrelenting inflation. And while we remain deeply grateful of efforts undertaken in FY 2023 to ensure no SHPO office experienced a funding decrease as a result of the changes to the HPF apportionment formula, for 23 states that equates to flat funding two years running. This is on top of many years of chronic underfunding. As such, it is imperative we see increases to the SHPO HPF appropriation in both FY 2025 and FY 2026.

Recognizing the involved nature of the federal agency budget planning process, we are at this time proactively looking forward to FY26 appropriations for the HPF, and would welcome a conversation with your agency on the current state of affairs experienced by the 59 SHPOs. In seeking this early communication, we hope to shed light on the specific challenges these state agencies face in performing federally mandated and community-driven responsibilities. We believe such information could greatly assist your efforts in preparing an FY26 budget request to further support historic preservation efforts nationwide through the constituent-focused, on-the-ground national network of State Historic Preservation Offices. Workforce challenges, GIS/data shortfalls and disparities between States, as well as an ever-growing amount of technical assistance continue to be top of mind. **Further, the recent investments in infrastructure have resulted in increased project reviews for SHPOs to the tune of 42.7% - stretching SHPO offices beyond capacity, without additional funds to support such efforts.**

We also remain committed to the reauthorization of the Historic Preservation Fund which has been extended until years end, following its expiration in the fall of 2023. Increasing the authorized program amount, and for an extended period of time, is of paramount importance to national historic preservation efforts. Reauthorization will assure federal historic preservation funding continues and quite simply, will demonstrate the continued commitment of Congress and the Nation to historic preservation as we approach the America's 250th anniversary in 2026.

As you know, the current authorization amount of \$150 million has gone unchanged since 1976. We believe this number must be adjusted not only to reflect inflation, but to reflect the growth, success, and positive impacts this program has had through the last five decades. Broad support exists to increase the authorized amount to *at least* \$250 million to meet current operational needs. This program has proved its worth time and again, and for that reason, a longer term of *at least* 10 years is desired. At current, we support the current bipartisan legislation ([H.R. 3350](#), the *Historic Preservation Fund Reauthorization Act*), and support the introduction of similar legislation on the Senate. **Your public support of a reauthorization effort would be much appreciated, and I hope you will consider drafting a letter of support to the Chairs of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources and House Natural Resources committees, as well as any other avenues you deem appropriate.**

Our Conference and its dedicated public servants remain committed to the preservation of our history, giving a voice to all Americans, driving economic development and job creation, and revitalizing communities.

NCSHPO would appreciate the opportunity to arrange a call to discuss funding needs further and answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully yours,



Ramona M. Bartos
NCSHPO Board President

cc: Joy Beasley
Jenifer Eggleston
Serena Bellew