

I am writing to express my support for the Cultural and Museum Education Act in the State Education Department's 2008-09 budget proposal. The Board of Regents vision includes collaborations among formal education institutions, libraries, museums, performing arts centers, businesses and social service agencies. The Act is about helping chartered museums and historical societies become more accountable stewards and educators. The Act recognizes, for the first time, that museums and historical societies are active participants in New York State's community of education.

As a professor of History and director of museum studies at Buffalo State College and more recently as the executive director of Western New York's premier Historical Society, I can attest that New York State's museums serve as critical resources for students, teachers, and life-long learners. Each year, museums offer millions of New York State school children opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills they need to participate in the twenty-first century knowledge economy by providing experiential, curriculum-based programs that expand classroom lessons and supplement literacy programs. I have the privilege of leading an institution that embraces this responsibility and makes education a priority. For example, the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society has participated in a three-year Teach American History program with the Buffalo Public Schools through the State University of New York at Buffalo. Our museum also works closely with the Theodore Roosevelt National Inaugural Historic Site on curriculum based education for elementary school students through our exhibits and tour programs. We host Literacy Volunteers in pre-school reading programs. We provide history loan kits and CD Roms to teachers to support classroom instruction.

Our museum's five-year strategic plan (2008-2012) takes our commitment to education even further. We recognize the educational challenges that New York State faces and are committed to supporting our community. The call to action by the Read to Succeed Buffalo Citywide Literacy Campaign, a community partnership for student achievement is one initiative to which we are committed. The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society provides an exceptional venue for providing literacy and history education for both children and adults. With additional funding provided by the Cultural and Museum Education Act, our museum will be positioned to expand our role in educating the people of New York.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

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