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American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta Inc.

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Mr. Chairman:

I appreciate the opportunity to convey to this subcommittee the perceptions of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta concerning the reauthorization legislation for the Institute of Museum Services.

There are about 200 botanic gardens and arboreta in the United States which annually provide opportunity for an estimated 30,000,000 citizens to understand and enjoy the plants which are basic to our survival and to a meaningful life. Here they can touch base with the natural world in ways not available through traditional educational programs.

These institutions have been, and continue to be, extensions of private munificence - and in this lies the promise and the problem. The promise is the flexibility and directness with which such institutions respond to local needs. The problem is that private money, once given, cannot remain perpetually effective over decades of devastating inflation.

The wells must be recharged. We believe that the ideal way to recharge them is with a mix of funding; private funding at the local level, and public funding at the federal level which assures that society at large bears some responsibility for the

continuance of institutions serving the public demands.

We would like to see three changes as a result of these hearings.

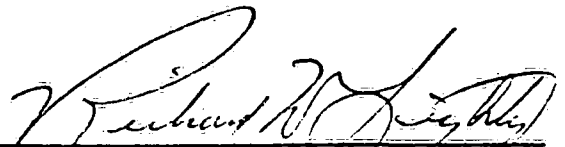
1. That the Institute of Museum Services be authorized to aid associations such as ours as we seek to improve the effectiveness of our member institutions and their professional staff as they serve the public. The effect of such monies are multiplied by the number of institutions which receive our publications, participate in our training seminars and meetings and benefit from our accreditation and certification programs.
2. We strongly urge that the thoughtfully conceived "cornerstone grants" be authorized. Properly administered, these will enhance both the diversity and the quality of our programs at a time when public attendance is growing and financial resources are dwindling in their purchasing power. We do feel, however, that the needs of smaller institutions must be carefully assessed as this "cornerstone grant" program is implemented. The grants must be tailored to fit the diversity of size and functions which characterize our public gardens. We hope that as guidelines for grants are drawn up, consideration will be given to doubling the presently suggested grant ceiling for single-year grants. We hope to work closely with the Institute of Museum Services on the needs of all of America's public gardens.

3. We urge that equal access to all types of grants be assured in future funding for all museums. We would hope that the maintenance of gardens would be as likely a candidate for federal funding as the curatorship of ceramics in an art museum. To deny public gardens the means to implement and maintain their particular complex and fragile art forms simply because those administering the federal agency have failed to include us in their definition of art, is to allow vested interest to dictate public policy.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, while many in government have been concerned with duplication of funding, we in the botanic garden and arboretum field have been concerned by its absence. In 1977-1978 public gardens received not a penny of the more than 55 million dollars in challenge grants distributed by NEA and NEH. I'm confident that these hearings will result in a narrowing of the cracks between the boards, and that we can move in concert toward a future where public gardens receive funding at a level commensurate with their service and analogous to that of other museums.

Again, my thanks on behalf of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta for the opportunity to share our perceptions.

Signed



Richard W. Lighty, Ph.D.
President
The American Association of
Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, Inc.

28 June 1979