14 July 2022

Representative or Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address

City, State Zip

Re: Changes to National Maritime Heritage Grant Program Funding Process

Dear Rep. or Sen. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

I write to express a concern.

The National Maritime Heritage Grant Program was created by Congress through the National Maritime Heritage Act of 1994 to ensure the preservation of America’s rich maritime heritage and provide support for their educational programs. A funding stream was created from a percentage of profits from scrapping ships in the National Defense Reserve Fleet by the Maritime Administration (MARAD, DOT). The National Park Service (NPS) was tasked to administer the program.

Unfortunately, the funding source from ship scrapping has proved insufficient and unreliable. Since the first distribution of only $650,000 in 1998, only $10 million has been awarded in grants between 2015 and 2018, with no awards since 2018. An awards program was announced in 2022 by NPS, but only $1.1 million was available, with the expectation that the amount would increase to $2 million with further transfers from MARAD.

In all previous grant cycles administered by NPS, individual non-profit organizations, local, state, and tribal governments could apply for a grant directly to NPS. In the cycle announced for 2022-23 however, that is radically changed. *Only* State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (SHPO, THPO) may apply for grants. They can then make sub-grants to applicants in their respective states or territories, or they may favor “in-house projects,” leaving less funding available to applicants from their states or territories.

This means that if a maritime museum or organization wants to apply for a funding, but the state SHPO did not apply for and win a grant, then the organization is denied the opportunity to even submit a proposal. One cannot apply in another state. Moreover, NPS announced it expected no more than 10 awards to be made: 5 in preservation, 5 in education. There are nearly 1,000 maritime heritage organizations in more than 40 states and territories, plus state and local governments. With a deadline for proposals fast approaching on 20 September 2022, the vast majority will not even be able to apply.

This new grant process fails to meet the spirit and letter of the National Maritime Heritage Act and must be changed now! We ask you to act on our behalf to restore the intent of Congress and the Act nearly 28 years ago.

Name

Organization

Address

City, State Zip

Cc: Dr. Timothy Runyan, National Maritime Alliance, via email runyant@ecu.edu