March 31, 2020

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of America’s orchestras, and as a National Partner of Arts Advocacy Day 2020, the League of American Orchestras asks you to strengthen federal support for the arts. The only national organization dedicated solely to the orchestral experience, the League has a diverse membership of more than 2,000 organizations and individuals across the U.S.—from world-renowned orchestras to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music. The impact orchestras create is supported by a critical combination of public and private support. We request your support for policies and funding that will strengthen the arts in communities nationwide:

**Broaden public access to the arts by supporting $170 million for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).** Orchestras exist in all 50 states, serving virtually every community, with annual budgets ranging from less than $30,000 to more than $100 million, and NEA grants help many of them to expand public access to performances, support music education for children and adults, and foster the creative work of living classical musicians, composers, and conductors. NEA funding directly supports local projects, and the distinction of winning federal support such as an NEA grant is critical in leveraging giving from other sources like private foundations, corporations, and individual contributors that recognize the grant as a national seal of approval.

**Increase the capacity of nonprofit organizations to serve community needs** by restoring and expanding the full value and scope of charitable giving incentives for all taxpayers through enacting a universal charitable deduction and enacting further policies that will strengthen the nonprofit arts community. As part of the nonprofit charitable sector, orchestras depend upon private philanthropy and civic support to fuel programs that serve the community. Support from donors across the economic spectrum enables orchestras to respond to local needs and form community partnerships through education, artistry, economic development, and social service programs. Charitable giving does not enrich donors: it is an investment in the public good.

**Provide students with a complete education** by fully supporting arts education through the Well-Rounded Education provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act, allocating $40 million to the Assistance for Arts Education programs in the FY21 Labor-HHS Education appropriations bills, and requiring the U.S. Department of Education to reinstate the National Assessment for Educational Progress in the Arts. As local partners in music education, orchestras collaborate with schools to support arts education opportunities that equip students with the skills, knowledge, and imaginative capacity needed to succeed.

**Improve international cultural engagement** by enacting legislation that requires U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to implement reasonable processing times for O and P petitions as required in law and provide much-needed reliability in petition process for visa petitions filed by, or on behalf of, nonprofit arts-related organizations. U.S. orchestras routinely invite highly sought-after international musicians to perform, providing both American musicians and audiences the opportunity to experience extraordinary musical talent, and in turn encouraging a supportive climate for our orchestras to perform abroad. We also urge Congress to further improve international cultural exchange by dedicating increased resources for arts diplomacy programs within the Cultural Programs Division at the U.S. Department of State.

I thank you for your leadership and urge your support for policies and funding that strengthen the arts and help to advance the orchestral experience for all communities.

Sincerely,

Jesse Rosen, President & CEO