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Honorable Luciano “Lucky” Varela, Chair
Legislative Finance Committee
State Capitol, Room 307
Santa Fe, NM 87503

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Creative New Mexico is a statewide arts and culture organization promoting awareness of the importance of the arts and culture to our quality of life, the education of our young people, and our state’s economic well being. Our organization appreciates the important contributions in these areas made by the Department of Culture Affairs -- especially New Mexico Arts, Historic Preservation, and our state museums and historic sites – as well as the Arts & Cultural Districts Program of MainStreet in Economic Development. We encourage you to support their budget requests for FY2016, including expansion requests.

A recent UNM Bureau of Business & Economic Research report indicated that employment in arts and culture industries in New Mexico is equal to nearly one in ten jobs, more employees than the construction and manufacturing industries combined. Artists and artisans are small, entrepreneurial businesses that contribute to their local economies. They are especially important in our rural areas.

In FY2015, about 180 nonprofit organizations will be supported by grants from New Mexico Arts for their arts and cultural programs throughout New Mexico. These organizations deliver important programs in arts education, performances and exhibits, and arts-based economic development activities.

The grant fund currently distributes about \$1 million a year, a level of funding that has not increased since FY2000. While the level of funding has not increased, the number of organizations has increased from 147 in FY2004 to 182 in FY2015, resulting in much smaller grants.

With this in mind, we strongly urge you to consider doubling the New Mexico Arts Grant Fund to \$2 million. This would increase the capacity of the funded organizations greatly, especially those in rural New Mexico, and strengthen their contributions to their communities.

We thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Jim Patterson, President