



**U.S. House Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill
Fiscal Year 2021
Minnesota Testimony – The Bell Museum**

Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Kevin Lindsey and I have the privilege of serving as the CEO of the Minnesota Humanities Center.

Let me begin by thanking you, Chair McCollum, for your leadership and enthusiastic support for the Humanities which resulted in an increase to the budget last year for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

We are also grateful for your long-standing support of the Minnesota Humanities. I was honored when you called to share the good news that the NEH had awarded us a \$350,000 challenge grant to support our building renovation efforts.

We are cautiously optimistic that we will begin renovations this summer upon receiving \$750,000 in bonding from the State Legislature. Our project is in Governor Walz' bonding proposal.

The Minnesota Humanities seeks to promote the humanities in an effort to create a just society that is curious, connected and compassionate.

Our mission is to use the disciplines of the humanities to help people connect their past, present, and future together to allow them to increase shared understanding and spark positive change.

This past fall I went on a listening tour and visited with librarians, k-12 educators, academics, college and tribal college administrators, civic leaders, and people interested and passionate about the humanities.

What I heard was a desire for us to support educators, honestly discuss our past, promote culture, promote storytelling, strengthen democracy and enhance civic education. We took the advice to heart.

This month, we release our latest book project “***Crossroads: An Anthology of Resilience and Hope by Young Somali Writers,***” which contains the prose and poetry of 31 young Somali adults.

We hope Crossroads will increase Somali student engagement and increase awareness and understanding of Somali culture.

We are holding four book launch events – Eden Prairie High School on March 15, Brian Coyle Center in Minneapolis on March 21, Southside Boys & Girls Club in St. Cloud on April 18, and the Rochester Art Center on June 9.

This fall we intend to publish three new books concerning notable Dakota and Ojibwe individuals for young elementary students.

We also continue to co-create materials to support educators. Partnering with educators and Twin Cities Public Television, we hosted a multimedia workshop this past November.

Educators who attended the workshop were provided with a wonderful immersion experience and a companion toolkit for TPT's documentary, America's Secret War, to help them build deeper understanding of Hmong culture, the Secret War's link to the Vietnam War, and encourage critical thinking.

We are finalizing plans with members of the Cambodian and Laos communities for a series of events in late May and early June which will discuss the 45th Anniversary of the Vietnam war and how its echoes still reverberate today for those communities.

In November we hosted Dr. Christopher Lehman author of *The Slaveholders of Payne-Phelan*, and next month will we host Amoke Kubat, playwright of *Angry Black Woman & Well-Intentioned White Girl*, to help us better understand issues of race within society.

Warrior Writers Workshop dates have been announced. The workshops allow veterans to have the space to tell their stories about their military experience. The four workshops will occur in – St. Paul (April 23), Mankato (May 7), Rochester (June 4) and Duluth (July 9).

Warrior Writers program participants will be encouraged to submit their writing for consideration at our Veterans Voices Award program which will be a lunch event held at the Wilder Foundation in St. Paul on October 10.

Our We Are Water MN traveling exhibit uses historical events, scientific information, and personal stories to strengthen their relationship to water and increase awareness and participation in water stewardship activities.

This year, We Are Water MN will be in Chisholm (from April to June), Pipestone (from June to August), Morris (from August to October) and Mankato (from October to December).

Finally, on April 2 at the Bloomington Center for the Arts we are going to have fun discussing what the popularity of the true crime genre says about our society with true crime podcaster Amanda Jacobson, forensic psychologist and author Frank Weber, Hennepin County judge Tanya Bransford, Minnesota Commissioner of Public Safety, John Harrington, and In the Dark podcast host Madeleine Baran.

Let me conclude my remarks by once again thanking Chair McCollum for her steadfast commitment to the Humanities. We all benefit greatly from your leadership. Thank you.

