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## **Congressman Higgins Announces over \$46,000 in American Rescue Plan Funding for the Burchfield Penney Art Center and the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library**

Funding Provides Resources to Those Facing Broadband Access Challenges & Supports Digital Programs

Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) announced two federal grants awarded to the Burchfield Penney Art Center and the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library. Funded by the American Rescue Plan and awarded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the grants provide funding to address community needs and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Libraries and the arts provide critical literacy and cultural education to the Western New York Community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations and services struggled to maintain their programs," **said Congressman Higgins**. "Funding from the American Rescue Plan provides necessary investments in community and cultural resources to ensure that community members have access to arts and educational resources as we emerge from the pandemic."

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library received \$17,816 in American Rescue Plan grant funding to support a loan program for Chromebooks and hotspots, which expands community internet access; a disparity that has been increasingly evident throughout the pandemic. Laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots will be available at 16 public libraries in urban, suburban, and rural areas. The program, available to adults and children, will provide these resources free of charge to communities with infrastructural and financial barriers that prevent computer and internet access.

"The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System is thrilled to be one of the two local recipients of the IMLS American Rescue Plan federal grant for expansion of library outreach to underserved local populations. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries promptly reset service priorities, examined new business models and responded to the communities' greater reliance on technology," **said Jeannine Doyle, Interim Library Director**. "When library doors were forced to close, we knew that those who had used onsite public computers and high-speed internet would be greatly impacted and we needed to respond by enabling access in

alternative ways. We will use grant funds to help further connect our community by purchasing, and offering for patron borrowing, laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots in several libraries."

The Burchfield Penney Art Center is closely connected to the Western New York community. Through the grant program, the museum received \$29,000 in American Rescue Plan funding to support staff expansion that will increase capacity, engagement, inclusion, and services. The museum will hire a full-time social media and digital content specialist to manage the Center's website, social media channels, emails, and digital communication to expand public access to Burchfield content and programming. The position will reach both on-site and online programming through a hybrid content model that meets audience needs during the pandemic.

**Burchfield Penney Art Center acting director Scott Propeack** said, "Support from the Institute for Museum and Library Services has been essential for the major projects we take on. Supporting our community through our online work during the pandemic has been an essential way to keep our activities in Buffalo meaningful and alive. This support will guarantee that we can do this into the future. Federal support at the community level creates strong cities."

The Institute of Museum and Library Services American Rescue Plan Grant program supports museums and libraries addressing community needs created or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and assists with recovery. The grants support projects that continue, expand, or enhance existing programs and services. Additionally, they give libraries and museums the opportunity to launch new programs to address emergency needs and unexpected hardships. This year, the program has provided over \$15 million in funding to museums and libraries across the country.

The Burchfield Penney Art Center is a museum dedicated to the art of vision of Charles E. Burchfield and distinguished artists of Buffalo, Niagara, and Western New York. Affiliated with SUNY Buffalo State College, they encourage learning and strive to be a catalyst for cultural vitality and creativity in Western New York. To learn more, visit <https://www.burchfieldpenney.org/main/>

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library consists of a central library, eight branches in the City of Buffalo, and 22 contract member libraries outside of the city. The libraries serve as a center for information, education, culture, and entertainment for Erie County residents. To learn more about locations and services, visit <https://www.buffalolib.org/>