



January 30, 2022

Michael Sirotkin, Chair
Economic Development Committee
Vermont State Senate
Vermont State House
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Senator Sirotkin:

I write in support of the Vermont Creative Futures Act (S.202). Vermont's cultural organizations drive a creative economy that defines our state and engenders a future built on ingenuity and innovation. Not only do we educate and build community—two key social needs in the face of challenges brought by the COVID pandemic—but we also directly and materially contribute to Vermont's economic life. Like so many sectors, our ability to operate has been dramatically curtailed by the pandemic and S.202 provides a clear path to recovery that improves the health of our institutions and community.

Shelburne Museum serves as an excellent example of the promise of S.202. Pre-pandemic, the museum annually provided educational opportunities for 10% of Vermont's school-age population while contributing over \$14 million to the local economy by supporting a payroll of 160 full and part-time employees who serve over 100,000 visitors a year. Half of these visitors come from out of state, carrying with them dollars that are directly spent in Vermont restaurants, shops, and hotels. Like our peers, the pandemic has forced us to redefine the ways we fulfill our mission, to pivot to on-line offerings and digital content, as well as doubling down on our outdoor programming such as the recent inaugural *Winter Lights* program that drew 28,000 people. To be able to sustain programming like this requires investment in our operations and facility, buttressing losses that forced us to cut our operating budget from \$7.2 million to \$5.5 million for the last two fiscal years. The grant opportunities within S.202 will allow us to continue to adapt our programs and campus to operate safely and effectively to serve our audiences and bolster the economy as we continue to recover and build toward the moment when covid is endemic and less impactful on society.

If there is any further information that I can provide in support of S.202, please do not hesitate to contact me at tddenenberg@shelburnemuseum.org.

Thank you, as always, for your leadership in these challenging times.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "T. Denenberg", is written above the printed name.

Thomas Denenberg, PhD
John Wilmerding Director and CEO

CC: Senate Economic Development Committee