May 8, 2025

Dear Friends of Chicago Theatre,

What if your last ticket was your last ticket?

This is the reality we are facing in this moment. We write to you today not just as advocates for the arts, but as fellow members of a passionate and resilient community that has long made Illinois—and especially Chicago—a national beacon for bold, inclusive, and innovative theatre. We're reaching out today with deep concern for the future of arts and culture in Illinois and across the nation.

It is with great concern that we share news of recent funding cuts from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). On May 2, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) issued termination letters to many grant recipients for both Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025. These letters informed recipients that NEA funding would not support project costs incurred after May 31, 2025—pulling the rug out from under artists and organizations that had already been approved for federal support. In addition, many applicants awaiting final confirmation of their FY25 awards were told their projects would no longer be funded.

Congress has shown strong bipartisan support for the NEA, appropriating $207 million annually for FY2023, FY2024, and FY2025. That support has been vital—not only for direct NEA grants, but for sustaining the entire ecosystem of state and regional arts agencies that depend on federal investment to serve communities across the country. For many theatres in our region—particularly small and mid-sized companies—NEA support has been a critical lifeline, helping to nurture new works, support emerging artists, and bring transformative storytelling to communities across our state.

This loss isn't just about dollars and cents—it's about the loss of opportunities: for youth to discover the power of their voices through theatre education, for underrepresented artists and rural or underserved communities to share their stories onstage, and for audiences of all backgrounds to come together in shared experience.

The Illinois theatre community is nothing if not tenacious. But make no mistake: these cuts have real, tangible impacts. Jobs will be lost. Programming will be reduced. And the vibrancy of our cultural landscape—something that takes decades to build—could begin to dim.

Here's how you can help:

1. **Contact your representatives.** Let them know that federal support for the arts is essential. You can easily reach your senators and representatives via https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials.
2. **Support local theatres directly.** Donate, subscribe, or buy tickets. Even a small contribution makes a difference.
3. **Raise your voice.** Use social media, community forums, and conversations with friends and neighbors to share why the arts matter to you.
4. **Join us in advocacy.** The League is working with our sibling organizations across the country to take action. Keep an eye on our website and email newsletters for details on how to participate. As a non-profit service organization, we support over 200 theatre

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organizations across the region. Help us continue this work through spreading the word or making a donation at https://leagueofchicagotheatres.app.neoncrm.com/forms/donate.

Without your help, your last ticket could be your last ticket, your local theatre can be boarded up, your favorite artist can be unemployed, your community program could vanish, the stories we share can end.

We remain committed to our mission: to support, promote and advocate for the theatre industry in Chicago and across Illinois. We know the arts are not a luxury—they are a vital part of who we are. And with your support, we will continue to rise to this moment, together.

With gratitude and resolve,



Marissa Lynn Jones
Executive Director
League of Chicago Theatres