May X, 2020

Sarah T. Stage

Grants Manager

Division of Cultural Affairs

Florida Department of State

R.A. Gray Building

500 South Bronough Street

Tallahassee, Florida  32399-0250

Dear Sarah:

On behalf of the Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (BACVB), I would like to voice my support for The Bishop Museum of Science and Nature and its application for general support from the Division of Cultural Affairs.

The BACVB’s overall goal is to drive visitation to our area through domestic and international advertising, public relations and additional marketing disciplines. As Executive Director of the BACVB, I have seen firsthand the importance of having robust Arts and Cultural offerings – not only for residents but also for visitors looking for a differentiator among destinations.

In fact, our research has shown that Arts and Culture is one of the main drivers of visitation to our destination – attracting thousands of visitors and generating millions of dollars in economic impact on an annual basis – and The Bishop (formerly the South Florida Museum) has historically been one of the most attended attraction in the county. Please note the following facts about tourism in our area:

* Visitation surpassed 3.2 million in 2019
* Tourism contributed roughly $58.5 million in taxes to our area in 2019
* The total economic impact of tourism in our area was $1,386,064,700 for 2019
* Visitors to Manatee County saved resident households more than $375 in taxes last year

That is just 2019. For years, The Bishop has been one of the top attractions in Manatee County, aiding not only attracting these visitors but also in the continued development of our vibrant downtown core, which is becoming one of the top in the state. It continues to work with our many local cultural partners to heighten awareness of Bradenton. Its collaborative work creates business growth and awareness of the impact of arts and culture for economic development.

Our county is truly fortunate to offer experiences at the Bishop that are not available elsewhere. Through the Museum’s unique resources, visitors can explore the universe, the natural history of our planet and its life, the habitats and ecosystems of some Florida’s native wildlife including the Manatee Rehabilitation Aquarium, and much more.

In addition, The Bishop has been tremendously successful at securing world-class traveling exhibitions and varied programming including lectures from nationally recognized scientists and artists. It has also focused on necessary expansion and on-going updates to ensure it continues provides a one-of-a-kind (and top tier) visitor experience. Going forward, it is imperative that it has the resources it needs to continue to do so in order to further set our destination apart from our competitors.

The Bishop Museum is beyond deserving of the state's Cultural Facilities Grant and I emphatically support its grant application, knowing our destination and its visitors will benefit from it for years to come.

Sincerely,

Elliot Falcione

Executive Director

Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau