

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

April 7, 2020

Ms. Deborah F. Rutter
President
John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
2700 F St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20566

Dear Ms. Rutter:

Responding to the acute and immediate need to assist millions of Americans during this national crisis, last month Congress worked on a bipartisan basis to swiftly pass the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (the CARES Act).¹ Included in the legislation, at the request of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, was a \$25 million allotment to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (the Kennedy Center).² According to the *New York Times*, however, the Kennedy Center now intends to furlough most of its administrative staff and more than 700 hourly and part-time employees.³ These layoffs, whether temporary or not, are counter to the spirit of the CARES Act and are concerning to Congress.

The assistance in the CARES Act is a commitment from the government to stand by and assist those businesses and institutions that keep the American people employed. To that end, the bill stipulates, in short, that small businesses receiving loans under its provisions are required to pay back a percentage of the loan commensurate with the number of employees furloughed or otherwise terminated.⁴ As a “job creator,” the Kennedy Center should be held to the same standard as American private sector businesses.⁵ A Kennedy Center press release stated it was “drawing from” Congress’ designated funds to offset furloughs.⁶ In addition to employee compensation and benefits, use of the funds has been earmarked for “deep cleaning” and

¹ H.R. 748, 116th Cong. § 2 (2020).

² *Id.*, Div. B, Title VII.

³ Julia Jacobs, “As Furloughs Grow, Kennedy Center Defends Use of \$25 Million in Aid,” NY TIMES (March 31, 2020): <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/arts/kennedy-center-defends-25-million.html>.

⁴ H.R. 748, Div. A, Title I, § 1106(d)(2).

⁵ The Kennedy Center, Press Release, “A Message from the Kennedy Center Regarding the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act”: <https://www.kennedy-center.org/our-story/message/>.

⁶ The Kennedy Center, Press Release, “Our Steps to Ensure the Future of the Presidential Memorial and National Center for the Performing Arts”: <https://www.kennedy-center.org/our-story/ensuring-the-future/>.

Ms. Deborah F. Rutter

April 7, 2020

Page 2

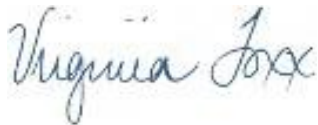
“information technology.”⁷ If the Kennedy Center is required to furlough its employees, it should return a portion of money Democrats fought so hard to secure.

In light of the Kennedy Center’s most recent actions, public skepticism over the Democrats’ \$25 million special allocation to a cultural center while small businesses struggled to keep people on the payroll was well-founded. To help Committee Members understand the full financial posture of the Kennedy Center, please provide a staff briefing to address the following issues:

- 1) an explanation for any and all furloughs, layoffs, or reductions in pay;
- 2) a delineated explanation of expenses for the Kennedy Center; and
- 3) an iterative plan to mitigate against additional furloughs, layoffs, or reductions in pay.

Please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 to schedule the telephonic briefing. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Virginia A. Foxx
Member of Congress



Ralph W. Norman
Member of Congress



Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress



Mark E. Green
Member of Congress

⁷ *Id.*

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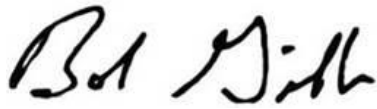
Page 2



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Robert B. Gibbs
Member of Congress



Fred B. Keller
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform