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Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney

Testimony before New York City Council Committee on Women's Issues and Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

September 8, 2014

Chairwoman Cumbo, Chairman Van Bramer and members of the City Council Committees on Women's Issues and Cultural Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of City Council Resolution No. 354 calling on the U.S. Senate to pass the companion legislation to H.R. 863 to establish a commission to study the creation of a National Women's History Museum on or near the National Mall in Washington, DC. I would like to thank Council Member Kallos for introducing a resolution in the New York City Council in support of this important effort.

I authored H.R. 863 and introduced it with my Republican colleague, Marsha Blackburn. In May, the bill passed the House with overwhelming bi-partisan support by a vote of 383-33. Senators Susan Collins and Barbara Mikulski have introduced the Senate companion bill. It has 28 co-sponsors, including all 20 women Senators. I am confident that the bill would pass should it come to a vote.

The Commission that would be established through this legislation would be independent and entirely privately funded. In other words, it obligates no taxpayer dollars. The Commission would be tasked with presenting Congress with several plans for creating a museum dedicated to showcasing the extraordinary contributions of women to the development of our nation. It would be required to include an option for a privately funded museum. Surely, *studying* a women's history museum should not be a partisan issue.

Just looking at monuments, museums and historical accounts in textbooks, it is clear that the story of women throughout U.S. history has gone largely untold. According to a survey of eighteen history textbooks, only ten percent of the individuals identified in the texts were women. Less than five percent of the 2,400 national historic landmarks chronicle women's achievements. We know that even here in New York City's Central Park, there are no statues of non-fictional women. And in the Capitol building, just 13 of the over 200 statues honor women.

A comprehensive National Women's History Museum would make women's history more than merely an afterthought and properly chronicle the half of our history that is unknown and unheralded. It is intended to include stories of women from all races, religions, ideologies and professions. The independent commission model to study potential museum location, construction and management has been very successful in creating some of our nation's most loved museums.

A National Women's History Museum is not only important to telling the story of our past. It would undoubtedly be a source of inspiration for future generations. Again, I want to thank the City Council for holding a hearing on this bill. Your resolution will undoubtedly raise awareness of this important issue and provide much-needed support to move the bill forward. Thank you.

Testimony from Jean Afterman, Sr. VP., Asst. GM, New York Yankees
September 8, 2014

I was very lucky growing up – I had fantastic female role models because my parents taught me to believe that I can do anything, and they showed me examples throughout history. I learned about women rulers, and the powerful women of literature, myths and legends. I learned about women who died for their country, who lived for their country, and about women scientists who made discoveries and cured disease. I learned about all of these women, I learned about those who doubted them and about how these women overcame incredible odds to achieve what they did. I didn't know it then, but my parents were my personal National Women's History Museum. Others are not so fortunate. Other girls need a place where they can learn and dream – I was able to do it from home.

We need a place where young girls (and boys) can learn the whole story – not places where only half the story is told. Where young girls, or women of any age, can dream about doing things and achieving dreams. We need a place where women can learn from the women of history and from their achievements. This great country was built by both men and women and when you speak only of the men, you are not only teaching girls and boys that women don't matter, and that they never have mattered, but you are also giving them only half the truth. And shame on us for doing that.

I am only the second generation in my family to be born in this country. Both of my grandmothers came here, to New York City, fleeing war, oppression and terror in their country. They came here with nothing, and built lives for themselves and for others. My Grandma Milly even taught other immigrants in the Settlement Houses on the Lower East Side. She isn't famous, but, like millions of other women, she changed the world from the moment she stepped off of the boat. Their story is equally important.

My organization, the New York Yankees, where the banner of pride and tradition is flown, deserves a place in national women's history. I am only the third female Assistant General Manager in Major League Baseball, and now I am the only woman assistant general manager in Major League Baseball. I hope that this will change. I have been the Assistant GM at the Yankees for 14 years. My predecessor, Kim Ng, was the second female AGM. I am proud of the fact that the New York Yankees and my General Manager, Brian Cashman, have seen fit to hire and retain not one, but two, women assistant GMs – the only organization in all of professional sports to do so. And young girls and boys deserve to know about it.

We need to have a place where little girls can go and know that *they* can be Assistant GMs and GMs, doctors, lawyers, Justices of the Supreme Court, scientists, leaders, artists, athletes, professors; a place where they can see with their own eyes that women matter, that they have always mattered.

We cannot allow only one story to be told. Think about this country with only one point of view, with only one voice, with only half the story. I urge you to support the National Women's History Museum, so that all of our stories can be told and women will not be systematically ignored or erased from history. That happens in other places in the world, but not here, not in the U.S., and certainly not in New York City.

AN ACCOUNTABLE NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM AND DEMOCRACY PLAN FOR ACTION

WHEREAS, the time has come to build a national museum of women's history on the National Mall to reflect the story of how women and men in the oldest organized women's movement have led the world in advocating for women's equality and in so doing are broadening the concept of democracy to fully embrace the equal rights of women; and

WHEREAS, women's history is also unique in that while women have contributed to American public life since revolutionary and colonial days, formal women's history remains largely invisible but is evolving through the contributions of museum professionals with the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the U.S. Park Service, Sewall-Belmont House, the National Women's History Project; and regional and local museums; and

WHEREAS, a private effort to plan for a national women's history museum has been underway for the past 17 years, and the U.S. House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 863, Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Women's History Museum (NWHM), and a similar bill, S. 398, is pending in the Senate, with the legislation being placed on an unlimited, confidential hold; and

WHEREAS, passage of the NWHM commission legislation set off an uproar among conservative women groups and the NWHM has been criticized as being a plan to brainwash women in feminist views, and with the chair of the Concerned Women for America demanding that she be appointed chair of the commission; and

WHEREAS, this legislation authorizes a commission to study the potential (rather than intended) creation of a private women's history museum and includes only 8 members chosen from highly restrictive types of combined expertise, bans compensation for commission members and prohibits public funding, provides a limited timeframe of only 18 months, exempts the commission's proceedings from the Federal Advisory Commission Act that requires open meetings, public notice and report; and

WHEREAS, a new museum focused on women's history should be a truly national museum that is both a public and private entity supported by public funding and private donations as many major museums require and with a strong affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution in order to ensure that this public purpose is ensured and that the highest quality of its work is promoted;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NOW places its full support behind the creation of a truly national, authentic, inclusive and accountable public national women's museum on the National Mall that reflects the full history of women in the U.S., the work of many women leaders and organizations throughout American history to expand democracy and women's rights, and with appointment of commission members in consultation with major women's organizations and recognized women's history scholars; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NOW calls upon the Administration and Congress to adopt legislation and take other steps to establish the NWHM and Democracy Plan for Action Presidential Commission to develop implementing recommendations for the establishment and maintenance of the NWHM and Democracy in Washington, DC as a public-private entity with sufficient funding for the planning commission members, consultants and operations, along with a programmatic plan of action that is vetted and developed with extensive public and scholarly input; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the legislation establish an independent, professional commission not connected to any existing private entity, but is typical of all commission efforts intended to plan and establish a federally-sponsored museum on the National Mall, including as part of the structure the Department of the Interior and National Park Service, which have expertise in planning, staffing and curating such museums; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that to achieve these ends that NOW will work with others to recommend to the administration and Congress that the structure of the NWHM and Democracy Plan for Action Presidential Commission should have a large enough membership (up to 25 members); adequate authorization (up to two years); public resources (including staffing) as well as requirements for membership diversity (racial and ethnic) as well as inclusion of activists and experts drawn from women's organizations and those with expertise in the American women's movements regardless of academic specialty.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

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