



# MICHIGAN SENATE

## Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

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Date Submitted: 03/18/2026

**1. Sponsoring legislator's full name:**

Senator John N. Damoose

**2. Cosponsoring legislators' names (if applicable):**

N/A

**3. Intended legislatively directed spending item recipient:**

Soo Locks Children's Museum

**4. Physical address of legislatively directed spending item recipient and the intended location of the project or activity:**

221 & 223 W. Portage Ave. Sault Sainte Marie, MI 49783

**5. The recipient's employer identification number:**

474767505

**6. Requested amount of the legislatively directed spending item:**

\$1,150,000.00

**7. What is the purpose and how does the legislatively directed spending item provide a public benefit that is an appropriate use of taxpayer money?**

The Soo Locks Children's Museum respectfully requests legislatively directed spending in the amount of 1,150,000, which will support the final completion of construction and full activation of the Soo Locks Children's Museum facility. Funds will be used for installation of key interactive exhibits — including a large-scale water exhibit with an external filtration system — as well as essential furnishings, a fully equipped maker space, and remaining interior finishing elements required for safe occupancy and public opening. This investment ensures the museum launches fully operational and positioned to serve families, schools, and visitors across the Eastern Upper Peninsula from day one. This investment will directly advance the museum to a critical readiness stage. By addressing these critical remaining infrastructure needs, funds will allow the museum to move from partial construction toward

operational status, positioning the organization to attract additional support for educational programming. Every dollar of this request will directly contribute to physical improvements that are necessary for the museum to meet occupancy standards and open its doors to the community. The Soo Locks Children’s Museum will serve as a cornerstone of Sault Ste. Marie’s downtown revitalization and a vital addition to the region’s tourism infrastructure. Located one block from the Soo Locks, where nearly one million visitors gather each year, the museum will provide a year-round attraction that complements the city’s strong seasonal tourism economy. It will help extend visitor stays, increase local business revenue, and generate steady foot traffic to downtown restaurants, retail stores, and lodging establishments. By drawing families and tourists into the city center during all seasons, the museum will help stabilize the local economy and enhance the quality of life for residents. This project will have a profound social and educational impact. In Chippewa County, one in five children lives in poverty, and nearly sixty percent of preschool-aged children do not participate in structured early learning programs. The Soo Locks Children’s Museum will address this need by providing accessible, affordable, and culturally inclusive experiences that promote learning through play. The museum will serve as a space for healing, creativity, and connection, especially for families facing barriers to enrichment opportunities. It will encourage curiosity and self-confidence in children while fostering family bonding and community pride. Once fully funded, the SLCM will be positioned as a permanent family infrastructure serving rural communities across Michigan’s Eastern Upper Peninsula. By drawing these visitors deeper into the downtown district, the museum will enhance tourism, boost small business revenue, and encourage longer visitor stays—key goals for sustaining rural economies dependent on seasonal travel. Additionally, construction and ongoing operations will create jobs in building trades, museum management, and visitor services, while fostering partnerships with local colleges and the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians and Bay Mills Indian Community to support workforce training and cultural programming.

**8. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received or been awarded any of the following types of funding in the past 5 years? If so, how much? Check all that apply:**

Federal, State, Local

**Amount**

\$606,333.00

**9. Estimated time frame for completion of the legislatively directed spending item project:**

February, 2027

**10. Is the recipient a nonprofit corporation?**

Yes

*Additional Information for Nonprofit Corporations (if applicable)*

*The answer to questions 1 to 3 must be "Yes" for the nonprofit corporation to qualify for a legislatively directed spending item.*

**1. Has the nonprofit corporation continuously operated in this state for the preceding 36 months?**

Yes

**2. Has the nonprofit corporation had a physical office in this state for not less than the preceding 12 consecutive months?**

Yes

**3. Does the organization have a board of directors?**

Yes

**4. List all of the officers and active members on the board of directors:**

Raquel Fernandez Earns, Ph.D. – President Ashley Flickinger – Vice President Amy Kelso – Secretary Diane Chevillot – Treasurer Andrea Schwab – Director Joe Moening, Ph.D. – Director Saad Ashraf, Ph.D. Director Jason Swedene, Ph.D. – Director Julie Barbour, Ph.D. – Director Amie Lawson – Director Sara Doghmi – Youth Advisory Council

*Certification By Sponsoring Legislator*

*"I certify that my immediate family members, legislative staff members, and I have no direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the requested legislatively directed spending item."*

*"I certify that the intended recipient of this legislatively directed spending item is not a for-profit entity."*

*"I certify that the information in this form is true to the best of my knowledge."*

*Senator John N. Damoose*