

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
February 11, 2020**

**TESTIMONY OF
THE BUSHNELL
&
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
CAPA - SHUBERT THEATRE
&
PALACE THEATER
&
STAMFORD CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

Good evening members of the Committee. My name is Jason Pietrangeli and I am the Chief Financial Officer for the Stamford Center for the Arts - Palace Theatre.

I am John Fisher, the Executive Director for the Connecticut Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) and the Shubert Theatre in New Haven.

I am David Fay, President and CEO of the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts.

I am Frank Tavera the Chief Executive Officer of the Palace Theater in Waterbury.

We are also proud Board members and members of the Connecticut Arts Alliance.

Again collectively, we are here representing the designated funding identified as the “Performing Arts Centers.” As always, we extend our gratitude and appreciation to the Committee, to the General Assembly, and to the Governor for the financial support that we have received in past years. The positive impact these funds have on our institutions and the communities we serve is immeasurable.

As you may imagine we are pleased that Governor Lamont’s proposal for the next fiscal year does not seek to alter the appropriation to be made in FY 2021 to Arts and to our Performing Arts Centers. Together, we are here tonight to voice our support and appreciation for the continuation of this important and vital appropriation.

Over the past years during these hearings, we have represented ourselves as independent and unique institutions that share a common mission. We stand united in serving as the cultural centers of our urban communities, working to engage diverse audiences and improving the quality of life of all State residents through our various arts and education programs. We are fortunate that this Committee has always seen fit to support the cultural and artistic value of our organizations, appreciating that as cultural anchors in our cities, the surrounding communities, and beyond, it is the Palace Theater in Waterbury, the Shubert in New Haven, the Bushnell in Hartford and the Stamford Palace Theatre that serve:

- as employers of full time, part time, and seasonal workers, providing meaningful jobs to over 750 individuals,
- as catalysts for economic spending in our communities, annually welcoming over 600,000 patrons and generating over \$55 million in impact to our localities,

- as tourist attractions drawing not only CT residents but residents from our neighboring states,
- to improve the quality of life in our communities and work collaboratively with other arts organizations in efforts to make our cities viable places to work, live and play.

Historically we have served as good financial stewards of the State funding, consistently leveraging our annual support by ensuring a positive return on the State’s investment to Connecticut and its municipalities. The calculated ROI is 39 times the level of funding we directly receive, proving the arts as a secure and smart investment in our State economy. Not only can we quantify the positive financial impact we have in our communities, but our collective organizations also take great pride in having an enormous positive impact on the well-being of our residents as well as local businesses such as restaurants and hotels. It is imperative that organizations like ours remain active and stable so we can continue to enhance the quality of life throughout Connecticut.

Although we remain grateful and appreciative of the State’s support, and we understand the State continues to face financial challenges, we would be remiss in not recognizing that our organizations, and the arts in general, have not experienced any funding increases in many years. Giving rising overhead and production costs and our efforts to maintain a well-qualified and compensated workforce, we encourage the State legislative body to consider increasing funding to the arts through the various means that are being considered during this budget cycle.

If an increase in State support is at all possible for FY 2021, we would be able to provide an even greater return through additional programming and help further stimulate the economies of the cities and communities we serve. We are true partners - partners with the State and partners with the cities we call home. We are also optimistic that the future prosperity of the State lies with the cities, and all great cities need a cultural center and hub to thrive.

As “not-for-profit” performing arts centers, who rely on private and public support to achieve our missions, we especially appreciate your recognition and continued financial support for the crucial role we play in enhancing our State through the power of the arts.

We are grateful for your support and leadership. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



David Fay
President and CEO



Jason Pietrangeli
CFO
Director



Frank Tavera
CEO



John Fisher
Executive