



Date: February 10, 2020

To: Appropriations Co-Chairs and Committee

Co-Chair, Senator Catherine Osten
Co-Chair, Representative Toni Walker

Dear Members of the Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the role and importance of humanities in Connecticut - to Connecticut residents, Connecticut's non-profit organizations, and Connecticut's economy. My name is Jason Mancini and I am the Executive Director of CT Humanities.

CT Humanities, also known as the Connecticut Humanities Council, is a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities and has been actively shaping and supporting the history, heritage, and civics foundation of our state since 1974. As the only state-wide humanities organization, our grants, programs, and digital initiatives provide access to high quality Connecticut-based content for all of Connecticut's residents and visitors.

CT Humanities currently has three principal areas of engagement. First, and perhaps best known, is our granting program through the CT Humanities Fund. We have multiple competitive grant lines that are accessible to Connecticut non-profit organizations with the goal of providing funding and strategic guidance to help improve their operations and to create and deliver new programs and exhibits to the public. During the past two completed fiscal years, since the State restored funding to CT Humanities, we have awarded approximately \$1.3M to over 140 Connecticut museums, historical societies, cultural organizations, and libraries.

Second, our Connecticut Center for the Book is organized in partnership with the Library of Congress. Through this, we annually host the Connecticut Book Awards (this past year at the Hartford Public Library) – recognizing the best books by Connecticut authors or about Connecticut places, people, and events. We deliver to Connecticut's youngest citizens in some of our most vulnerable communities our Book Voyagers program which aims to support young readers and their families as they develop reading skills and comprehension. To further this investment, we are now working with the Connecticut Storytelling Center to develop and deliver Connecticut stories to Connecticut schools and libraries.

Finally, our digital humanities initiatives guide Connecticut in the 21st century knowledge economy by connecting the content produced in our colleges and universities to the consumers in our history and heritage organizations, K-12 classrooms, and in our businesses and tourism markets. ConnecticutHistory.org functions as the encyclopedia of Connecticut history and provides rich, well-sourced content for all of Connecticut's 169 towns. TeachItCT.org provides educators and students in Grades 3, 5, 8 and High School with accessible and supportive

curricular prompts, Connecticut-based content, and primary source material from Connecticut institutions. TodayinCThistory.com is a partnership with the Office of the State Historian and Connecticut Public that highlights the remarkable people, places, events, and ideas of our state. We have recently piloted ConnTours, a heritage tourism mobile app that provides the connective fabric to our state. Themed tours include the Freedom Trail (partnering with DECD), the Revolutionary Trail, Women's Heritage Trail, Literary Heritage and Connecticut Author's Trail and Architectural Wonders Trail. Coming soon are the Yankee Ingenuity Trail, Maritime Heritage Trail, Folklore Trail, and much more! As we look to build and sustain greater access to digital content, CT Humanities has funded a project with the Connecticut Digital Archive and the Connecticut Collections Alliance to integrate our digital resources across repositories. The first phase of this project is centered on archives associated with the Suffrage Centennial and is connected to initiatives set forth by the Secretary of State's office.

Connecticut Humanities is committed in principle and practice to promoting and supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. In partnership with the Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO), Office of the Arts, and the Connecticut Historical Society, we are embarking on a comprehensive campaign to inventory, survey, and create a needs assessment for Connecticut's historical and cultural organizations. Through our StEPs-CT program with CLHO, we have provided leadership and training to nearly 50 small community organizations aimed at strengthening and guiding them to a more sustainable future. In recent follow-up evaluations, almost all of the participating museums and historical societies have reported increased visitation and revenue as well as improved connection to their communities. In one respondent's words, "CTH staff urged us to apply for national awards which we received. This has energized board members, and is strengthening our planned giving campaign." With such positive feedback from participants, we are preparing to launch another STePs-CT class later this year.

CT Humanities annually receives about \$850K in funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which must be matched. NEH funding covers much of our operational costs and most funding contributed by Connecticut has been judiciously dispersed through the CT Humanities fund with the following five priorities in mind: 1) Reaching broad audiences; 2) Addressing social issues through humanities disciplines; 3) Fostering collaboration among organizations; 4) Encouraging creativity and demonstrating ingenuity and innovation; and 5) Promoting heritage tourism.

An important provision of our granting program requires organizations to secure matching funds, thereby developing additional pathways to donors, grantors, and other funding sources. As one grantee put it, "CTH grants allow me to leverage other funding (matching funds) to support innovative programs that focus on civic life and participation in CT drawing from humanities themes." This multiplier effect is a direct result of State investment in CT Humanities and is critical to the vitality and sustainability of our small and large non-profits alike. In additions, CT Humanities supports our humanities organizations that seek federal funding through the National Park Service (Ridgefield Historical Society), Institute of Museum and Library Services (Mystic Aquarium), National Science Foundation (UConn Avery Point), and directly from NEH (Mystic Seaport).

We know from recent studies that every \$1 invested in humanities organizations generates \$63 in economic activity and that every \$1 from a CT Humanities grant receives \$3 in matching funds from private and corporate donors. We also know that major investments are being made in arts and cultural organizations by all of Connecticut's neighbors. Connecticut has much to offer and much to benefit from such investment.

Last year, Governor Lamont's Arts, Culture, and Tourism (ACT) policy committee proposed an increase in funding for CT Humanities from its current \$850K to approximately \$2.1M. This proposal was supported by the Speaker's Blue Ribbon Panel on Tourism. While CT Humanities could accomplish a great deal with such a funding increase, we would be grateful for any increase that would allow us to continue our investment in Connecticut's history and heritage community, our development of educational and heritage tourism resources, and our commitment to fostering civic engagement.

I want to thank legislators for your ongoing support, as well as the hundreds of history and heritage organizations and libraries across the state that continue to forge ahead with the public interest in mind, and I would like to acknowledge the contributors – whether corporate, small business, or personal - and volunteers for all of these organizations. These organizations are the lifeblood of our state.

Sincerely,

Jason R. Mancini, Ph.D.
Executive Director