

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

**TESTIMONY OF**

**CONNECTICUT FLAGSHIP PRODUCING THEATERS (CFPT)**

Good Evening. My name is Cynthia Rider and I am Managing Director of Hartford Stage. I joined the Hartford Stage in July 2019.

I am here today speaking on behalf of the Connecticut Flagship Producing Theaters, which include Hartford Stage, Goodspeed Musicals, Long Wharf Theatre, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Westport County Playhouse and Yale Repertory Theatre.

I first would like to thank the Appropriations Committee and your colleagues in the legislature who continue to recognize and support us. Today I am here to update you on the continued success of our theaters in our state and to ask that you will consider restoring additional funding to us. Over the last several years our funding has remained level and we are sincerely appreciative of the commitment to maintaining this funding. However, we strongly believe the economic, social and educational benefits we bring to the state make a case for increased funding.

Unlike many of the Performing Arts Centers with which you may be familiar, the Flagship Producing Theaters, formed in 2014, are non-profit organizations that create theater from scratch right here in Connecticut. Collectively we annually infuse the state with \$42 million in economic activity.

Collectively:

- We create more than 1,700 jobs for artists and administrators right here in Connecticut;
- We spend just under \$26 million in taxable payrolls;
- We purchase local materials in excess of \$6.6 million;
- We spend over \$2.5 million on local printing and advertising and over \$1.3 million on hotel nights and apartment rentals for guest artist housing;
- We attract nearly 388,000 regular patrons; and
- The return on the State's investment is consistently over 400%

Beyond our *economic* impact, we also have an essential *community* impact. Each of our organizations has partnerships with schools and local organizations, offering a vast array of programs ranging from student matinees to library discussions on inclusivity to training teachers

and young theater professionals. Collectively, **we serve over 40,000 students of all ages throughout the state.** Our impact can be exemplified through the words of Will Clifford, 7th Grade Team Leader, Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy in Windham, whose students participated in Goodspeed's Arts Education Collaboration:

"It [AEC] is a fantastic program that brings the power of live theater to many students who, whether it be lack of exposure or resources, would not be able to attend. For the vast majority of our students, this program is their first exposure to the magic and significance of live theater.

...

The entire day of the performance activities is truly a transformative experience for our students... Students are singing along, applauding wildly to their new favorite performer- all because of that shared experience, coupled with the intimate space of the Goodspeed makes for an unforgettable experience.

...

I had the good fortune of having attended a similar experience at Hartford Stage when I was in school and it changed my life. It turned me into a consumer and supporter of the arts from an early age- and my life has been richer for that experience. Showcasing the arts is a more important endeavor than ever given this climate of tight school budgets and closed curriculums, but the program infrastructure and implementation at the Goodspeed is a beacon of inspiration for public-private partnerships."

Finally, our organizations have all received national recognition which has enhanced Connecticut's reputation. Most recently, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* won four Tony Awards, including Best Musical. This show premiered at Hartford Stage Company. Connecticut was also represented in New York with the musical *Anastasia* originally produced at Hartford Stage, *The Realistic Joneses*, which premiered at Yale Rep, and Long Wharf's production of *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. In addition, the Eugene O'Neill Theater received the National Medal of Arts from President Obama at the White House in 2016. Our productions have collectively won nearly 100 national awards, including 5 Tony Awards for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

We appreciate and applaud your continued investment in our future. However, level funding over the last few years has had a direct and negative measurable impact on the local economy, and immeasurable impact on the quality of life for the students and citizens of our state. As businesses and residents make decisions to relocate outside of Connecticut, it is essential that organizations such as ours sustain the ability to fulfill our missions. **Please consider restoring additional funding to our appropriations.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

