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State of CT Legislative Bldg.
Appropriations Committee
300 Capitol Ave
Hartford CT 06001

February 10, 2020

Appropriations Committee: Conservation & Development Subcommittee Public
Hearing, Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Re: MUSIC HAVEN

Dear Esteemed Senators and House Members:

Last year, after many years of advocating for funding through a budget line item, Music Haven finally secured funding in the amount of \$100,000 for FY 2020. However, we were the ONLY organization on the list that had an allocation for only Year 1 of the budget and nothing listed for Year 2. We have spent the last 6 months trying to get a response about why that was, and how it could be addressed. We worked on the assumption that the excellent case we made for funding us in Year 1 would also apply to Year 2, since we intend to continue teaching, playing, performing, and addressing the fundamental issue of unequal access to high quality arts education in our state. However, we recently learned that we will NOT be receiving any funds in Year 2 of the budget, and that our organization no longer appears on the list of groups to receive funding through this process.

I urge the Committee to allocate the current FY funded amount of \$100,000 to Music Haven in Year 2 of this budget and beyond—it is crucial that we remain on the list of organizations receiving funds through this process for the following reasons:

1. We are the ONLY organization in the State of Connecticut that provides 100% free one-on-one instruction on strings (and a variety of other programming) to students from low-income neighborhoods. Our students are

more than 90% Black and Latinx, and all live in low-income neighborhoods. Living in a low-income neighborhood (rather than an audition) is the requirement for program eligibility. Larger arts and culture organizations in New Haven and throughout the state remain in the budget, yet we're told "there's not enough money" to support our completely FREE program. This is inequitable and racist. Everyone should have access to the arts, and public funding needs to support organizations like ours for that to be possible. There is absolutely no funding source at the state level that provides resources of any kind in support of addressing the vast inequities in access to the arts for low-income communities of color, and virtually none of the funds on this list of allocations reflects a commitment to do so. Our inclusion on this list for FY 2020 marked the first time such an investment was made, and to remove us contradicts all of the state's stated commitments—particularly with respect to the arts—to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2. From an Economic Development standpoint, Music Haven is a smart investment for DECD and for the state's arts sector for two key reasons.

a. Despite our relatively small size (our budget next year will be \$650,000), we have a demonstrated commitment to providing excellent jobs in the arts sector—90% of our employees are full-time with benefits and access to professional development opportunities, and no employee earns less than \$22/hr. We have full-time faculty, not "teaching artists", and these musicians live, buy homes, and raise children in our community. As a result, every penny of our \$100,000 allocation this year will be spent directly on programming and will remain in our state—in fact, in our city. We do this because we have a model based on providing the highest quality programming to the kids who need it most. We are committed to excellent arts sector jobs because we want to keep great people—and we want to keep them because our 80 students and families benefit from long-term relationships with our teachers and staff, our audiences keep coming back because we provide world-class chamber music performances, and our organizational standards for fundraising, operations, and community engagement reflect the high quality of the staff we recruit and retain.

b. The future of an arts industry in the state requires that the sector figure out how to be more racially and economically inclusive. Our students are not only future musicians and music teachers (and whatever else they might want to be), they and their families—who are only exposed to classical music because we take away the economic barriers and open that door—are the future ticket-buying audience for the arts. This is inherently a shrinking sector if it is a sector that speaks and responds only or primarily to predominantly white communities of affluence.

3. If we lose this allocation, we essentially have NO PUBLIC SUPPORT OF ANY KIND in the coming years. Until fairly recently, we have regularly been able to count on a total of \$80,000-\$100,000 per year in competitive grant funds that we were very successful at securing each year. These have all been cut, eliminated, or for various other reasons have become unavailable to us. It makes no sense for a list of large arts and culture organizations that have earned revenue streams from high ticket prices and high tuition rates (and thus primarily serve higher-income constituencies and have access to more market-driven resources) to receive public funds year after year while organizations such as ours receive no public support of any kind.¹

A budget is a moral document. In fact, a budget is a much clearer articulation of values than any words could ever be because it deals in the allocation of resources—puts its money where its mouth is. This budget—*without* funding for Music Haven—says very clearly that the arts are a privilege and not a right, and the State of Connecticut doesn't believe that it makes any sense to invest in arts programming for communities of color or low-income communities. This budget—*without* Music Haven in it—is telling

¹ Please note, our \$100,000 allocation represents less than 20% of our budget. Next year, our budget will be \$650,000. We have a very robust and diverse fundraising operation, and because we provide our programming and play most of our concerts for free, we raise it all through individual donations, smaller foundations, and a small amount of earned revenue from concerts and workshops. We're not asking this allocation to carry our budget—just to provide SOME public support so we can start each fundraising year off at \$100,000 instead of at \$0.

our nearly 80 kids (some of whom have been studying violin, viola or cello with us for more than a decade_—that the State of Connecticut doesn't think that's a good use of their time, or a good use of state money. It's telling them we value museums and symphonies and professional theaters that they can't afford to visit with their families, but we don't think it makes much sense to spend state money on THEM, on their community, and on the music they're working so hard to make. Please send them a more hopeful message and let them know they are valued, their community is valued, and they have the right to play music and excel as musicians as much as anyone else in this state.

Sincerely,

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