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To: CT Appropriations Committee, via APPtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: Bill # 5005, Funding of Music Haven

Date: February 10, 2020

We submit this written testimony in lieu of being able to appear in person at the public hearing scheduled for Tuesday February 11, 2020, at 5:00 pm in Room 2C of the Legislative Office Building.

We write to strongly urge the committee to restore funding to Music Haven, which has been cut from this year's proposed budget. We have resided in the New Haven area for the past 12 years. Among the things we deeply treasure and appreciate about our community is the thriving arts and culture environment in Connecticut. As parents we have been fortunately able to provide our 11 year-old daughter with opportunities to participate in a variety of high quality visual and performing arts education programs, and with exposure to a range of arts and culture events and experiences. However, many children in our community are not able to access such programs due to costs—primarily children of color whose families live in low income neighborhoods. We believe that it is critical to provide public support to programs that address this disparity of opportunity and access, and were therefore extremely disheartened to learn that state funding to Music Haven has been withdrawn in the current budget proposal.

Music Haven is a 100% free program that provides high quality music education programming to low-income students in New Haven. It is (we believe) the ONLY program within our state through which students from low-income families can receive completely free individual music lessons, free instruments, free comprehensive music education, and the opportunity to perform in professionally directed ensembles. As a testament to the tremendous impact of arts education on the developmental outcomes of at-risk youth, Music Haven graduates have a 100% rate of enrollment into 4-year colleges, in a city where public high schools have an approximate 65% rate of college matriculation.

In addition to donating to Music Haven, we have enjoyed wonderful community concerts performed by both students and staff. The programming that Music Haven provides—for free—has a market value of nearly \$7000 per year per student. There is no way that the families of Music Haven students will be able to access anything comparable if Music Haven is unable to continue to operate. Although they do receive support from community members, such as our family, who believe in the importance of their mission and their work, they cannot operate without significant public funding sources. Eliminating Music Haven from the budget will take away a critical arts and education resource from some of our community's most economically vulnerable families.

We appreciate that CT has an ongoing fiscal crisis. However, it is quite distressing to see that even in a "bad budget year" there are funds for arts and culture programs that serve affluent, predominantly white communities—such as museums and festivals and theaters that charge high ticket prices, and tuition-based programs that families with means can access—but the one program that provides full access to music education to low income communities of color is slated to be cut. We urge you to take a stand in support of equity in arts education by restoring Music Haven's funding of \$100,000 for its critically important work in supporting positive educational outcomes for children from low-income families.

Sincerely,
Diane Purvin and Seth Rosenthal
Hamden, CT