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Statement of Noah Bloom
Neighborhood Music School
February 11, 2020

To the Appropriations Committee:

Neighborhood Music School (NMS) would like to offer brief comments on House Bill 5005, *An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021*.

My name is Noah Bloom, and I am the executive director of Neighborhood Music School in New Haven, Connecticut. NMS is the largest non-profit arts education organization in the state and has grown to be one of the ten largest in the country, serving nearly 2,500 students each year from 80 plus towns and cities across the state. With an annual budget of \$5 million, we employ 200 people, including 140 exceptional teaching artists, and contribute more than \$3.5 million in payroll towards our local economy.

We very much appreciate that the Governor's proposed budget provides \$80,540 for NMS as part of the budget for the Department of Economic and Community Development.

When Senator Chris Murphy visited us a few years ago, he aptly stated that "the decline of every great civilization is directly correlated to the decline in support for the arts." Investing in the arts is an investment in our livelihood.

For more than 100 years, Neighborhood Music School has been positively impacting lives as a national leader in the field of arts education. We believe that every person has an artistic voice, and we exist to help them find it. We believe that the arts are a human right and a human need.

NMS was founded as a Settlement House in 1911 serving new immigrants. Over the last few years we have recommitted to our original mission of making our programs affordable to all who choose to participate in them. We are a hub where people of all ages, races, nationalities, and economic means come together around shared learning and shared expression.

Today, NMS provides more than \$500,000 in financial aid and tuition free programs each year to more than 550 students, tripling our impact since 2014. During this same period, our state funding has decreased by almost 50 %. We urge the committee's retention of these funds as the budget process proceeds this session.

The ability to sustain an institution of this scope right here in Connecticut is a great point of pride. Given our large size and the limited donor base of a smaller city, state funding is critical to our mission and ability to serve such a broad community. We will continue to work tirelessly to secure a wide range of funding sources and leverage state grants to bring in the additional funds that allow us to make such a huge impact on our community.

The Department of Economic and Community Development is provided \$80,540 for NMS next fiscal year. We appreciate that vote of confidence and will continue to use every dollar to provide scholarships to low-income students and families.

Thank you for your consideration,

Noah Bloom