

Dear Appropriations Committee

Last year Governor Lamont, Speaker Joe Aresimowicz, and a Legislative Tourism Caucus chaired by Sen. Formica, each grappled with policy and funding issues related to the DECD's Culture and Tourism division.

In my 40 years involved in culture & tourism in CT (working for Wadsworth Atheneum, CT Landmarks, and the New Haven Museum - and with trusteeships at the CT Trust for Historic Preservation and on the state Culture & Tourism advisory board), I have never seen so much focus and interest in this subject by elected officials. It's much appreciated.

The CT Arts Alliance (see below) had a major role on the Governor's blue ribbon committee. They have tried to influence the process variously.

These are the recommendations they came up with:

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- #1 Dedicate and codify that the Tourism Fund invest 40% to Arts and Culture and 60% to Tourism
- #2 Change the name of this fund from "Tourism Fund" to "Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund"
- #3 Allocate 25% of existing Lodging Tax revenue into the Tourism Fund (compared to the current allocation of 10%)
- #4 Ensure that all excess revenue in the Tourism Fund is appropriated annually and shared equally among all line items; do not add new line items
- #5 Allocate additional new dedicated revenue sources into the Tourism Fund; do not increase the Lodging Tax rate

These are mostly BAD IDEAS.

#1) A pure money grab by Big Arts to get in on the already sparse funding for tourism. Why? They don't say. I love art. But the performing arts (their main focus) is not a tourism driver and they already get plenty of state funding.

#2) Change the name of the "Tourism Fund" to give the arts a piece of it? Even if CT wasn't up to its neck in debt this would be a dishonest and unjustifiable money grab.

#3) CT has the highest lodging tax in the US - which is embarrassing if we care about tourists. The FACT that almost 90% of that revenue presently goes into the general fund - is little known and almost embarrassing given that the original purpose of the tax was only to support tourism. 25% would be reasonable but only TO FUND TOURISM - not this maze of redundant arts orgs and administrators. It's embarrassing.

#4) The "line items" alluded to are one of the most indecent, unjust, bad policy acts in our state government. The "Arts Earmarks" privilege a couple dozen organizations at the expense of good policy and fairness to the 200+ cultural orgs and attractions - most of which never see a dime of public money. Please - not one more dime for these "line items." It would be policy progress if we eliminated them entirely!

Culture & Tourism (and the arts) matter to the well-being of Connecticut. But our current policies and funding arrangements are a mess.

Sincerely,

William Hosley
Enfield CT
Terra Firma Northeast
wnhosley@snet.net

Dear Arts Leaders and Advocates,

The [Connecticut General Assembly](#) began its 2020 legislative session this week on February 5. This year will be a "short session" which ends on May 6, but there is a midterm budget proposal from the Governor and other legislative proposals which we'll be following.

2020 Legislative Overview

[CAA has prepared policy recommendations and general priorities for the 2020 legislative session that you can access and read online here.](#)

The Governor's midterm [budget](#) for the next fiscal year (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021) includes level funding for arts and culture. This is good news, but the budget still needs to be approved.

The Appropriations Committee will hold public hearings on the budget on **Tuesday, February 11, in room 2C of the [Legislative Office Building](#) beginning at 5:00 p.m.**