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February 7, 2020

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

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative DiMassa, Representative Horn, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, a non-profit service organization working to inspire, engage and connect the public in building a strong and connected arts and culture community that is integral to the economic development and the collective well-being of our rural region. We support a \$34.4 million non-profit arts and cultural industry in the region. This sector supports 812 full-time equivalent jobs and generates \$3.4 million in local and state government revenue annually.¹ The creative sector is crucial to the tourism industry in our region, as well as providing a necessary component of our towns' well-being.

Thank you for your consistent support for the creative sector in Connecticut. Creating the Tourism Fund (PA 17-2) is a great step to ensure the sustainability of the state's investment. However the overall investment you have appropriated has decreased 60% since 2009 leaving many artists and cultural organizations constrained in expanding their direct impact on our towns. With only a \$1.46 per capita investment Connecticut is falling behind our neighbors (Massachusetts invests \$2.63 and Rhode Island \$1.97) which is doubly troubling given our lack of regional or local municipal investment in the arts.

We applaud the decision to maintain current funding levels in the Governor's budget, but with a \$7 to \$1 return on investment greater support is needed to maximize our economic and community impact. My recommendation aligns with the CT Arts Alliance's statewide policy platform:

- Dedicate and codify that the Tourism Fund invests 40% to Arts & Culture, and 60% to Tourism
- Change the name of this fund from "Tourism Fund" to "Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund"
- Allocate 25% of existing Lodging Tax revenue into the Tourism Fund (compared to current allocation of 10%)
- 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
- Allocate additional new dedicated revenue sources into the Tourism Fund; do not increase the Lodging Tax rate

The creative sector stands ready to help solve many of the issues facing Connecticut and our towns. In our rural region there is

¹ Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences in the Northwest Connecticut Region, Americans for the Arts (2017)



overwhelming evidence from across the country that investment in arts and creative sectors lead to rural prosperity. I believe these recommendations will lead directly to job creation, increase economic activity, and attract business, tourism and families to Connecticut. I grew up here and moved back recently because I believe in the future of Connecticut and I think the arts and creative sectors are key to that future.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony I can be reached at the contact information below if you have any further questions,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rufus de Rham'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rufus de Rham, Executive Director
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