

Testimony in support of H.B. No. 6119

AN ACT CONCERNING ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM FUNDING

February 10, 2021

TO: Co-chair Senator Hartley, Co-Chair Representative Simmons, Vice-Chair Representative Rochelle, Senator Needleman, and members of Commerce Committee:

I am a proud board member of the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition and resident of Mystic, CT. In addition, I am Executive Director of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, a non-profit orchestra based out of New London and the resident orchestra at the Garde Arts Center. We also perform in Norwich, Stonington, and recently, Willimantic. As noted in Americans for the Arts studies, additional spending when attending performing arts events drives downtown economic support, with an average of \$23.44 spent on top of tickets purchased¹. Investing in arts organizations through H.B. No. 6119 will have a direct impact on many organizations that will continue to drive further economic activity.

Increasing the percentage of the hotel and lodging tax that supports the Tourism Fund from 10 to 25% will help prevent further economic injury, address the impact of the shutdown, and accelerate recovery of not only the Arts sector, but all of Connecticut. The arts and culture sector is an economic driver for Connecticut and has been hit hard by the pandemic. It does not take funding away from another legislative priority because hotel and lodging tax revenue not currently allocated to the tourism fund goes to Connecticut's general fund. Also, it does not raise the hotel and lodging tax. It simply allocates a larger percentage of that tax revenue to the Tourism Fund.

Fixing the percentage of the Tourism Fund that is allocated to Tourism at 60% and Arts and Culture at 40% reflects how the fund is allocated now. It does not change how much funding is allocated to each.

Renaming the Tourism Fund to the Arts, Culture and Tourism fund more accurately describes its role in providing state funding to all three of these sectors. Federal Legislators and Governor Lamont have stepped forward with financial relief for the arts and culture community with funding to address the economic impact of the pandemic. This bill provides Connecticut legislators the opportunity to add their support.

Your support of H.B. 6119 will be crucial in helping our region to recover fully from the pandemic as well as to continue thriving in the future.

Sincerely,



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¹ <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/AudienceSpending.pdf>