

Dear Co-Chair Senator Hartley, Co-Chair Representative Simmons, Vice-Chair Senator Cohen, Vice-Chair Representative Rochelle, and esteemed members of the Commerce Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as an artist and patron of the arts in the greater New Haven, CT area. I am employed by the Yale Repertory Theatre/Yale School of Drama and have been fortunate enough to retain my job until at least June 2021. In the past I have also been employed by The International Festival of Arts and Ideas and The Elm Shakespeare Company, both vital contributors to our region's creative ecosystem which produces \$135 million in direct economic activity, supports 5,600 full time equivalent jobs, and attracts 700,000 attendees annually. Many of my artist colleagues across the state and country have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but are critical for restoring social connections, building cultural equity and racial justice, and supporting vibrant, healthy communities.

The pandemic has devastated Connecticut's creative economy, losing an estimated \$2.4B in revenue with unemployment or underemployment reaching 60%. The federal government, private foundations, and individual donors have made critical investments to help our sector, but the financial crisis is far from over. The state must provide significant support now to avert dire consequences. While Yale Rep will probably survive I am deeply worried for the Long Wharf Theatre, The International Festival of Arts and Ideas, and The Elm Shakespeare Company all of which are making great strides to create theatre and performances through an anti-racist lens despite the current halt on productions.

H.B. 6119 will provide both immediate and sustainable investment in the arts sector and [has been endorsed](#) by a broad coalition of stakeholders. These changes will help refill the Tourism Fund. [A recent OPM report](#) anticipated a negative balance of \$7M due to underperforming hotel occupancy tax during the pandemic. Eventually, this will restore funding for the arts to pre-recession levels. Connecticut only invests \$1.54 per resident in our arts sector, compared to \$2.52 in Rhode Island and \$2.64 in Massachusetts. Building Back Better from the pandemic includes arts and cultural experiences that will help build social empathy and help heal the torn fabric of this nation, ensuring that those experiences reach the new and veteran residents of Connecticut is up to you.

Thank You,
Elizabeth

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My gender pronouns: she/her/hers
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