

My name is Susan Struck Cash. I am writing in support of Bill #6119, Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding, specifically:

- Change the name to “Arts, Culture, and Tourism Fund”
- Codify 40% to arts and culture and 60% to tourism
- Increase the allocation of Hotel Occupancy tax to 25%

I wish to provide my personal testimony regarding the importance of this legislation.

I am a lifelong resident of Southeastern Connecticut and have been engaged in the Arts my entire life. Growing up in Lyme, I was originally nurtured in the rich heritage of the Old Lyme Artist's Colony and the Lyme Art Association. Artists such as J. Alden Weir, Thomas Nason, Henry C. White, Gregory Smith were known to me through their families and their work. It was my first experience of how art can define a sense of place and give meaning to our experience. Out of that beginning I pursued a career in art myself. After graduating from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston, I returned to the area, first to Niantic, and then in 1984 to New London. I am a long-time Artist Member of multiple arts organizations, including Mystic Museum of Art, Connecticut Women Artists and a supporter of the Hygienic Art Gallery and Garde Arts Center. I am also a retired Art Teacher, having taught 26 years at New London High School.

One of my main reasons for settling in New London was its burgeoning art center. I participated in the very first Hygienic Art Show and every year since. My husband being a musician and I an artist, we found inspiration and support within the New London community. Even so, the potential and promise has never quite matched up with the reality and execution. I see the primary reason for that shortfall being funding. Individual and endowment support cannot sufficiently meet the need to foster financially vital arts communities. I have seen first-hand the strain of lack of funding on the mission of all these organizations I have been involved in. The inconsistency and meagerness of funding has thwarted many hours of vision and planning, which would have greatly benefited the communities served by these organizations. This has an echo result on educational experiences as well. Students in our community wind up lacking exposure to the vitality of current, successful arts and culture available to them, and those organizations often curtail their outreach efforts due to lack of funds.

The more prominent incorporation of The Arts into the Tourism moniker will help strengthen the public perception that The Arts ARE tourism. In fact, it's what many tourists come to see! Formalizing the monetary distribution of funds

and providing a stable, dependable funding stream will reap ripple effects of benefits across local communities and statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences and viewpoint. I am hopeful that together we can help the arts shine in our communities.

Sincerely,

Susan Cash

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