

February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Grumbling Gryphons Testimonial by Leslie Elias Artistic Director**

In Support of Bill **H.B. 6119 An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism** for Public Hearing 2/11

Dear Legislators and Fellow Citizens of Connecticut,

I hereby give my full support for the H.B. 6119 Act to direct and provide additional funding for the arts and tourism for our great state of Connecticut. What helps make our state be great are the artists and arts organizations who have been working tirelessly to bring and enhance culture and cultural exchange throughout Connecticut. As artistic director and president of a nonprofit children's theater-Grumbling Gryphons, now celebrating 41 years of providing educational programs to children and families throughout our state, I can attest to the importance of the arts and tourism as central to the well-being of our citizens.

We are grateful to the wonderful institution of Connecticut Office on the Arts and all that it has provided for our nonprofit children's theater as well as for fellow artists throughout the state who strive day after day, year and year to bring quality programs of excellence to our communities! Without the support of Connecticut Office on the Arts throughout our 41 years of operation, it would have been difficult to sustain and keep doing our job; providing programs to children- from pre-k through high school, as well as in senior facilities, theaters, museums, libraries, festivals and more. We have provided employment to countless actors, musicians, mask makers, set designers, composers, tech crew, graphic designers, office assistants and more throughout these years and helped launch many careers.

We were honored to receive the Governor's Arts Award in 2003 and numerous grants which have been instrumental to our growth and livelihood. This enables us to keep providing innovative programming to children of all ages. During the pandemic the relief programs have been particularly meaningful and important to help save the arts. It is with great honor that I lend my voice to support this bill. There is so much talent in this state, from young people just getting started to veteran artists still struggling to survive and hone their art. Redirecting this funding will bring greater innovation and culture to our state, enriching imaginations and improving the very fiber of who we are. Help us to grow this great resource so that we the artists can give back to our fellow citizens!

Thank you for your time and energy dedicated to this matter and to your hard work as legislators. We are honored to be part of this very special state of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

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