

Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 6119  
AN ACT CONCERNING ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM FUNDING

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

My name is David R. Fay, and I am a resident of Rocky Hill, the President and CEO of The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Hartford, Connecticut, and a Board member of the Connecticut Arts Alliance (CAA), a state-wide, non-profit that advocates for support of Connecticut's cultural institutions collectively. I fully support the passage of H.B. 6119 and respectfully request that this critical legislation be considered for passage.

Arts in Connecticut contributes to five percent of the state's economy generating \$9 Billion annually. The arts sector supports over 57,000 non-profit jobs. With the outbreak of Covid-19, the creative industries in the state including The Bushnell were the first to close and will be the last to open waiting until we can bring back a full, live audience in the safest way possible for our over 350,000 patrons, 100 employees, and 650 volunteers. The State's theaters, live entertainment stages, symphonies, museums, and historic attractions were forced to shutter resulting in lost revenue of \$400 Million and over 33,000 jobs. Legislative action is required to stave off further economic damage, and to aid with recovery of the state's creative economy.

Arts and culture organizations in partnership with hotels, restaurants, and parking facilities create a delicate tourism ecosystem that rely on each other to thrive. Connecticut's cultural institutions play a critical role in the vitality, vibrancy and excitement of Connecticut's urban centers, our tourist destinations. The arts make our cities more livable, more visitable, and more culturally rich.

To this end, we are confident that after the pandemic, Connecticut can make a recovery once again becoming an attractive, affordable tourist destination if the appropriate legislative steps are taken. For this to occur, we ask that legislators dedicate 25% of proceeds from lodging tax to the tourism fund by increasing the allocation from 10 to 25% and replenish the tourism fund which the Office of Policy Management estimates will end FY21 with a \$13.8 Million shortfall. We also need to ensure that funding for the CT Office of the Arts and CT Humanities reflects their role as Connecticut's main source of support in every municipality.

We are so fortunate to have such strong leadership in Connecticut and appreciate your dedication in the passage of H.B. 6119. The arts community looks forward to the day when we can raise the curtain once again; and welcome back our visitors to share in those enriching live experiences that we have all greatly missed.

Thank you for your time.

David R. Fay  
President and CEO  
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Hartford, CT