



January 29, 2021

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

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 on behalf of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, a nonprofit service organization that amplifies, empowers, and unites artists, creative organizations, and residents. Our region's creative ecosystem produces \$135 million in direct economic activity, supports 5,600 full time equivalent jobs, and attracts 700,000 attendees annually.¹ Artists and creative organizations 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.

To be specific, the pandemic has devastated Connecticut's creative economy, losing an estimated \$2.4B in revenue with unemployment or underemployment reaching 60%². 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.

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. With a record number of people relocating to Connecticut, the responsibility to give them and all of our residents the arts and cultural experiences they deserve rests with you.

Thanks for considering this proposal,

Daniel Fitzmaurice
Executive Director

¹ [Arts & Economic Prosperity 5](#), Americans for the Arts (2017)

² [Lost Art: Measuring COVID-19's devastating impact on America's creative economy](#), Brookings Institute (August 2020)