



February 8, 2021

Connecticut General Assembly
State Capitol
Hartford, CT 06416

RE: HB6119

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of The Elm Shakespeare Company, in New Haven, CT. We are a nonprofit theater that brings people together through Shakespeare, enriching our community and strengthening the artistic and educational landscape of New Haven with a commitment to free, accessible, world class theater, and innovative educational experiences in our parks, classrooms, and neighborhoods. Over the past 20 years, we have impacted the lives of over half a million CT residents (including 1,000 students a year) from widely diverse cultural, socio-economic and educational backgrounds and have made an enduring contribution to the artistic, cultural, and economic vitality of New Haven. This remains our work today, in spite of the disastrous effects Covid-19 has had on the arts community.

The pandemic has resulted in a dramatic loss of contributed and earned income with the cancellation of our entire 25th anniversary season of Free Shakespeare in Edgerton Park and a substantial reduction in our ability to deliver in-person educational programming to our community stakeholders (including 10 schools and community organizations). Specifically, the pandemic has resulted in an overall dramatic reductions in both corporate and individual gifts as well as significantly lowered earned income from decreased education enrollments. While Elm's ability to survive this crisis is helped by the organization's small infrastructure and ability to shift income into converting or creating programs to be accessed online, the financial support from the state has been (and continues to be) instrumental – making it possible for Elm Shakespeare to keep making a difference in the lives and education of our New Haven kids, to keep our professional artists employed, and most importantly to serve as an emotional lifeline to our quarantined community. Thanks to the help we have received, Elm Shakespeare Company will weather this crisis and remain a vital part of the New Haven's cultural landscape.

As the pandemic continues, H.B 6119 will play a critical role in sustaining the arts in our state, and keeping organizations like ours alive. Once the pandemic is over, H.B. 6119 will ensure that Connecticut's arts organizations, like Elm Shakespeare, thrive and are able to keep making a difference in the lives of so many in our community.

REBECCA GOODHEART Producing Director  JAMES ANDREASSI Founder
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IN RESIDENCE AT SOUTHERN CONNECTICUTE STATE UNIVERSITY

H.B. 6119 will provide both immediate and sustainable investment to our organization and the entire arts sector. Recent OPM reporting anticipated a negative balance of \$7M due to underperforming hotel occupancy tax during the pandemic. These changes will help refill the Tourism Fund. Then, eventually, it 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.

Please keep the arts sector a point of pride for our state and accessible to everyone, by passing H.B. 6119. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Goodheart', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rebecca Goodheart
Producing Artistic Director