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February 9, 2021

**Testimony in Support of H.B. 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 ARTE Inc., a 501(c)(3) based in New Haven.

ARTE is asking you to support H.B. 6119. This bill will not only provide crucial funding for the hard-hit arts sector but will create long-term sustained funding. State funding of the arts lags far behind our neighbors. Connecticut only invests \$1.54 per resident in the arts, compared to \$2.52 in Rhode Island and \$2.64 in Massachusetts. This bill will restore arts funding to pre-recession levels and replenish the depleted tourism fund.

This funding is especially important to small arts organizations like ARTE Inc. ARTE provides free enrichment and education programs for underserved minority youth. Arte has served thousands since 2004 with after-school programs, a Saturday arts academy, workshops, cultural events, and scholarships. ARTE employs 24 part-time employees and 12 student employees.

COVID-19 has greatly impacted our youth and their social-emotional wellbeing. The isolation and lack of exposure will have long-term negative effects on students. Arts programs can increase academic achievement, help decrease youth involvement in delinquent behavior and improve youth attitudes about themselves and the future. This bill will provide significant support for the arts sector and organizations like ARTE. Restored funding will allow ARTE to reach at-risk youth, help them overcome the negative effects of the pandemic, and cultivate positive role models.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David S. Greco', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

David S. Greco  
Cofounder / Director