

Statement on:

Proposed H.B. No. 6119 An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding

Connecticut General Assembly

Commerce Committee

February 22, 2021

The Hartford Chamber of Commerce promotes, supports, and assists the business and civic communities in Connecticut's capital city. Our region is fortunate to be the home of many leading arts, tourism, and hospitality venues. These business and organizations not only enrich the quality of life in Greater Hartford, they also create jobs and generate vital tax revenues. That is why the Hartford Chamber of Commerce supports Proposed H.B. No. 6119.

Proposed H.B. No. 6119 aims to strengthen Connecticut's arts, culture, and tourism sector by ensuring equitable funding for these critical industries. Tourism generates supports 122,000 jobs and generates \$14.7 billion each year. Arts and culture represent 5% of our state's economy, generating \$9 billion annually while sustaining 57,000 jobs. These industries are not only important, they are also working to manage unprecedented challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID has led to a dramatic downturn in the arts, tourism, and hospitality economy. Venues across the state and capitol region have had to cease operations, leading to steep losses in revenue and significant job cuts. With recovery from COVID now on the horizon, the state has a critical opportunity to help these businesses and organizations capitalize on increased tourism and greater numbers of visitors to our state. Proposed H.B. No. 6119 will strengthen funding for arts, culture and tourism by allocating 25% of existing Lodging Tax revenues into the Tourism Fund and directing 60% of the Fund to tourism and 40% to arts and culture. Importantly, these changes will bring us more in line with tourism investments made by neighboring states, helping our local businesses more successfully compete.

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The capitol region plays host to many well-known centers of art and culture, from the Connecticut Science Center and New England Air Museum to the Bushell Center for the Performing Arts and the Mark Twain House and Museum. We offer hundreds of amazing, diverse options for dining and hospitality. As unique as each of these offerings are, one thing they have in common is the need for support as our state and region begins to rebuild in the wake of COVID. Proposed H.B. No. 6119 will deliver exactly the kind of help these businesses and organizations need and we encourage the members of the Commerce Committee to support this worthwhile legislation.



David Griggs

President and CEO

MetroHartford Alliance

