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Testimony submitted for the Joint Committee on Commerce Public Hearing, Thursday,
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Re: HB 6119: AN ACT CONCERNING ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM FUNDING.

Dear Esteemed Senators and House Members:

I'm writing on behalf of Music Haven and our 80 New Haven students and their families to voice support for HB 6119, An Act Concerning Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding. It is crucial that the allocation of Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue dedicated to Arts and Culture, and Tourism be increased from 10% to 25%. Public support for the arts is the only way to make sure the sector in CT is inclusive and equitable. Music Haven is the ONLY organization in the State of Connecticut that provides 100% free one-on-one instruction on strings (and a variety of other programming) to students from low-income families. Our students are 90% Black and Latinx, and being from a low-income household (rather than an audition) is the requirement for program eligibility.

In 2019, after many years of advocating for funding through the DECD budget process, Music Haven finally secured funding in the amount of \$100,000 for FY 2020. Our families and allies subsequently came together in 2020 to advocate to make sure we were included in the 2021 budget. However, it became clear that we—as a smaller organization serving low-income communities of color—got our foot in the funding door just as those funds became unavailable due to the pandemic. Now is the time to respond not only to this financial crisis in the sector, but also to the long-standing underfunding of the arts in our state by increasing the amount of funding from the hotel occupancy tax that is allocated to arts and culture.

Everyone should have access to the arts, and public funding needs to support organizations like ours for that to be possible. Allocating more funds to support Arts and Culture is the only way to make sure organizations like Music Haven continue receive the support we need and deserve from the State of Connecticut (as evidenced by more than 40 separate pieces of submitted testimony from allies throughout greater New Haven and enough phone calls and emails to clog up the inboxes of appropriations committee leadership ,one year ago today at a public hearing about the DECD budget).

From an economic standpoint, the arts are an excellent investment, making up 5% of our state's economy, and returning \$7 on every \$1 we spend. At Music Haven, our commitment to GOOD jobs in the sector is only possible because of support we receive from this fund. Despite our relatively small size (our budget this year is \$663,500), we have a demonstrated commitment to providing excellent jobs in the arts sector—most of our employees are full-time with benefits and access to professional development opportunities, and no employee earns less than \$15/hr (with most earning an equivalent hourly rate of between \$25 and \$35). We employ professional musicians as a full-time teaching faculty and ensemble, and these musicians live, buy homes, and raise children in our community. As a result, every penny allocated to us each year would remain in our state—in fact, in our city. We do this because we have a model based on providing the highest quality programming to the kids who need it most. We are committed to excellent arts sector jobs because we want to keep great people—and we want to keep them because our 80 students and families benefit from long-term relationships with our teachers and staff, our audiences keep coming back because we provide world-class chamber music performances, and our organizational standards for fundraising, operations, and community engagement reflect the high quality of the staff we recruit and retain.

The future of an arts industry (again, a crucial economic driver in the state) requires that the sector figure out how to be more racially and economically inclusive. Our students are not only future musicians and music teachers (and whatever else they might want to be), they and their families—who are only exposed to high quality instruction on their instruments because we take away the economic barriers and open that door—are the future ticket-buying audience for the arts. This is inherently a shrinking sector if it is a sector that speaks and responds only or primarily to predominantly white communities of affluence. And only expanded public support for our sector can support programs like ours, which focus on inclusion and equity.

Here are some excerpts from testimony submitted in support of Music Haven's inclusion in the state budget last year, which will only be possible in a sustained way with the passage of HB 6119:

- “As a parent of a child that attends Music Haven, I have seen this program change her life. This program has provided FREE cello lessons along with a free cello to my child for the past 4 years. My daughter was diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of 2 and had significant developmental delays. Attending Music Haven over the past 4 years, my child's grades in school have increased dramatically. She now has a dream

of becoming a neuroscientist and a cellist. So many students in New Haven benefit from this program.” (Nickia Corley, Music Haven parent)

- “I have been a student at Music Haven for 4 years now and I love it here. We are a family. I love learning how to play the cello and practicing new songs. I was not great at school before starting at Music Haven. Learning the cello has helped me get A’s and B’s in math and reading. I want this program to help other kids, too.” (Shanell Patterson, Music Haven Cellist, age 12)
- “ALL of these students are the New Haven Symphony Orchestra’s future; some of them are majoring in music performance at higher institutions and may very well become our future musicians someday. And for those students who choose to study other subjects, they will certainly be our future audience members.” (Caitlin Daly-Gonzalez, Education Director, NHSO)
- “Without this invaluable pipeline of talent, we will be unable to succeed in our diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in the future. While not every player will enter music as a profession, the children of Music Haven today are the performing arts audience of Connecticut’s future”. (Elaine C. Carroll, Executive Director, NHSO)

This is the kind of crucial work that funding for Arts and Culture supports. I urge you to pass HB 6119 to make sure programs like ours—which depend on public support to make sure EVERYONE has access to the arts—are able to keep continue our important work.

Sincerely,



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