

Testimony in support of HB6119

I would like to offer a personal example of why I strongly support HB6119, a much-needed revision of how Connecticut funds the arts, culture, and tourism.

Nearly 40 years ago, my wife and I lived in Manhattan, but made frequent weekend trips to the surrounding areas to explore where we might want to move and start a family. On one of those trips, we discovered Goodspeed Opera House in Haddam and were smitten. We went to every show and stayed at the Bishops Gate, the Inn at Chester, Copper Beeches in Ivorytown, etc. (no doubt paying the occupancy tax if there was one then!) We soon expanded our pursuits to the Ivorytown Playhouse, Westport Country Playhouse, and almost every one of Connecticut's outstanding art museums.

Delighted with Connecticut and how it fit our interests, we got a weekend place in Madison, raised a son at our home in Wilton, and have now retired back to Madison. I was a partner in a fast-growing business in Darien that doubled its employment of Connecticut residents before I left.

The point I want to make is that tourism, culture, the arts, the growth of Connecticut's economy and the enrichment of our citizens' lives are inextricably linked. The Covid pandemic has devastated the hotel occupancy tax that is critical to maintaining these activities as foundation stones of our state's prosperity and attraction to future residents. HB6119 offers a sensible, uncomplicated way to repair the damage and sustain the arts that produce such unmeasurable joy for our citizens, a joy that has been much lacking this past year.

Paul Kessinger
Madison, CT 06443