



David Lehman
Commissioner

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 11, 2021

*David Lehman, Commissioner & Governor's Senior Economic Advisor
Department of Economic and Community Development*

House Bill 6119: An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding

Senator Hartley, Representative Simmons, Senator Martin, Representative Buckbee and members of the Commerce Committee:

My name is David Lehman, and I am the commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). I appreciate this opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 6119: An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding. Our mission at the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is to develop and implement strategies to increase the state's economic competitiveness. We do this by attracting and retaining businesses and jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods and communities, and preserving and promoting cultural and tourism assets.

We appreciate the legislature's interest in supporting Connecticut's arts, culture, and tourism, and recognize the harm that the pandemic has done to businesses in the arts, culture, and tourism industries. The arts are critical to the state's economic infrastructure thanks to the community-serving arts organizations providing public services, including free music lessons, using arts for communication, arts and reentry services, arts and mental health, arts and the disability community, and arts and schools. We are grateful that our agency has been able to administer \$11 million in grants to 208 performing arts, humanities organizations, and museums, in addition to other loans and grant programs.

Furthermore, tourism's unique mission brings visitors to Connecticut, creating jobs to employ Connecticut residents, and generating state and local taxes to support public services. It also motivates Connecticut residents to embody the pride and spirit of an engaging destination. The objectives of our state tourism efforts are to build a research-based brand position, craft comprehensive and cost-effective marketing strategies, and execute marketing campaigns to promote Connecticut as an attractive place to visit, to live and to work, as well as grow a business.



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However, despite the valuable role of the arts, cultural institutions, and tourism to the state, the budgetary changes recommended in this bill are not reflected in the Governor's budget and would thus need to be budgeted for during the appropriations process.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Our agency is available to you if you have any questions, or if we can be helpful in any efforts to better support our state's arts, culture and tourism assets.