

Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 6119
AN ACT CONCERNING ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM FUNDING

February 10, 2021

TO: Co-Chair Senator Hartley, Co-Chair Representative Simmons, Vice-Chair Senator Cohen, Vice-Chair Representative Rochelle, Senator Needleman, and members of the Commerce Committee:

I am a proud board member of the Connecticut Arts Alliance and Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition and resident of Niantic. I am also Director of Marketing at Goodspeed Musicals, one of the largest arts organizations and tourism destinations in the state of Connecticut. In non-pandemic times, Goodspeed serves over 100,000 visitors, employs 275 people and creates over \$15 million in economic impact for the state. Overall, the Arts and Culture sector is responsible for 5% of Connecticut's economy, generates \$9 Billion annually and supports 57,000 jobs. In short, what is good for arts and culture is good for Connecticut.

I fully support H.B. 6119 and respectfully request that it be moved forward in the legislative process. I believe this bill to be critical for our industry to recover. All arts, culture and tourism organizations have suffered great loss during the pandemic and are working tirelessly to keep their businesses afloat until they can reopen and return to full operations. This bill gives our industries confidence that there will be funding support from the state now and in the future which will allow us to rehire workers and again welcome visitors from across Connecticut and the nation.

The impact of H.B. 6119 to Goodspeed and to Arts and Culture will be significant:

-Increasing the percentage of the hotel and lodging tax that supports the Tourism Fund from 10% to 25% will help prevent further economic injury, lessen the impact of the pandemic shutdown and accelerate not only our recovery, but the state's recovery as well. The bill is not raising the tax, but allocating more of the tax proceeds to arts, culture and tourism. Without this change, the Office of Policy and Management estimates that the fund will end the fiscal year with a \$13 million deficit leading to further devastation of the industries it is meant to support.

-Fixing the allocation rate for the Tourism Fund at 60% to tourism and 40% to arts and culture reflects how funding is allocated now and is supported by each of the sectors it supports. It is important for future economic stability and planning to keep the allocation rate as is.

-Renaming the fund as "Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund" more accurately describes how the fund is used and that it supports all three sectors.

Along with my colleagues from the Connecticut Arts Alliance and Culture Coalition of Southeastern Connecticut, I urge you to support H.B. 6119. Together, let's ensure that Connecticut's arts, culture and tourism entities are able to lead the way to a strong recovery and that our state remains a healthy, vibrant and culturally exciting place to live for all of our residents.

Sincerely,



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