



GREATER HARTFORD ARTS COUNCIL

February 10, 2021

Testimony in support of HB 6119: An Act Concerning Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding

Dear Connecticut State Legislature,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Greater Hartford Arts Council, a nonprofit service organization whose mission is to inspire all to invest and participate in the arts. For 50 years, the Arts Council has been transforming lives and changing communities with the power of the arts through grants, arts education initiatives, free community programs, and most recently a series of emergency relief funding for individual artists and arts organizations.

The arts and culture sector are an economic driver for Connecticut. It's a sector that represents 3.5% of Connecticut's economy and generates \$9 billion annually, while also supporting about 59,000 jobs. The arts are also critical to the health and wellness of our community, particularly in a time of national crisis like we are in at this very moment. The arts are vital to our health, they help us build resilience and provide solitude and comfort. All things so desperately needed right now.

The arts and culture sector has felt the devastating impacts of the pandemic. With entire theater seasons lost, museums closed for months on end and educational programs postponed indefinitely, this is time, and revenue, that arts organizations will never get back. At the same time, musicians and artists whose livelihoods depend on performing, sharing their talents, teaching and collaborating saw their income stream disappear overnight. The recovery of Connecticut is dependent on the recovery of the arts and culture sector.

Sustainable, increased funding is needed that is why we support the following adjustments to the Tourism Fund, as stated in H.B. 6119:

1. Increase the portion of room occupancy tax revenue directed to the Tourism Fund from its current allocation of 10% to 25%
2. Require that 40% of funds in the Tourism Fund be allocated to arts and culture and 60% of such money be allocated to tourism
3. Change the name of the "Tourism Fund" to the "Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund"
4. Change the name of the "Statewide Marketing" budget line to "Statewide & Tourism Marketing"

We have seen the arts and culture sector struggle through the hardest year of their operation. We also know the impact this sector made before and will make beyond the scope of the pandemic. There is a reason why arts and cultural districts have that name: the arts are the center of what makes

communities vibrant. Every time there is a theatrical performance, an exhibit opening, a sporting event; the surrounding restaurants and other small businesses benefit. When the arts are truly supported from an infrastructural level, the ripple effect on the community can't be ignored. The allocation increases noted above won't only ensure financial stability for organizations and employment of artist and arts workers and administrators across the state, the effects will be felt far beyond the confines of a given artistic venue.

When tourism is able to return to previous levels, we want to assure that the sites that draw tourists are there to show them the history and the modern day jewels of our state. When field trips return to school classrooms, it's important that students have the same opportunities to experience theater and museums that have changed the lives of so many young people in our state.

We ask the committee to support these recommendations that will generate jobs; spur economic activity; attract businesses, visitors and families to CT; and play a vital role in the recovery of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate McOmber
Interim CEO
Greater Hartford Arts Council

About the Greater Hartford Arts Council

The Greater Hartford Arts Council helps to improve lives and transform communities through the arts. We inspire all people to participate and invest in the arts in their region, so that together, we can create a thriving, vibrant community that is united by art. To learn more about Arts Council programs and services, as well as our United Arts Campaign, visit [LetsGoArts.org](https://letsgoarts.org) or follow us @letsgoarts_org on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/letsgoarts_org).