

Testimony to support HB 6119: an act concerning arts, culture and tourism funding

1. My name is Steve Mernick, President of the Board of The Rowayton Arts Center, Norwalk, CT;
2. The Rowayton Arts Center celebrates the study, creation and appreciation of the arts through classes, exhibitions and events open to all in the community. We have artists primarily from Fairfield and Westchester counties who take classes and exhibit their art. Visitors to our gallery come from the tri state area;
3. By directing more state dollars to support the arts, organizations like the Rowayton Arts Center could receive increased marketing dollars and funding to support our classes, exhibitions and other community activities;
4. Legislative Action is required to prevent further economic injury to the arts and culture sector;
5. COVID hit our primary revenue stream (classes) particularly hard as studio classes initially were cancelled. Additionally, we had fewer visitors to the gallery resulting in reduced art sales. Once we were able to commence classes in our studio, we have had a maximum of 6 students per class vs as many as 20+ students per class prior to COVID;
6. We need to get back to running our operations as normally as possible to help the community get back to their lives. By having the state provide support, we are able to continue to innovate in the ways we reach our community, whether it is an additional exhibition, speaker series, or virtual classes;
7. It is absolutely clear that the arts and nonprofit sectors need a consistent, strong base of investment to retain their presence in the community;
8. We have benefitted from the generosity of federal, state and local funding programs this past year. Without this and other support our activities would have been severely contracted and our very existence put into question; we depend on state support on an annual basis – this Bill will help !
9. Arts and Culture significantly strengthens the economic development infrastructure of the state, supports strong communities, improved quality of life and develops creativity/creative thinking to make Connecticut an attractive state in which to do business. Your support builds stronger communities !!