

RE: HB 6119 An Act Concerning Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding

I would like to speak to the importance of art and music in K-12 education, especially in the context of training medical and allied health students. I teach anatomy at the Yale School of Medicine. Human dissection violates so many societal norms and has a lasting impression on our students. During and at the end of the course, we ask students to reflect on their experience of human dissection. Many students process their emotions by writing prose and poetry, and through the visual and performance arts. Examples can be found on Yale's "Willed body donation" website, <https://medicine.yale.edu/education/donation/>. Many medical schools have similar programs.

I also helped promote arts and humanities programs throughout the years of clinical training. You have heard stories of how stressful and emotionally challenging it is to care for covid patients. Clinicians are often the only ones accompanying patients in their final days. Did you ever consider how clinicians relieve their stress? Appreciate that stress is intense even in "normal" times. Imagine being a medical student. How might you feel when you lost your first patient, and then had to break the news to the family. Bad things happen to people who have to decide between bad and worse options. Imagine running a family meeting where the terminally ill patient had to choose between a last-ditch effort at painful chemotherapy or comfort-care to ease the path to death. Imagine a family member asking you "Dr., what would you do?" A colleague related the story of a chance encounter with a new custodian and his supervisor. He overheard the supervisor say "Be sure to wash this hallway every day. This is where the young doctors come to cry." Again, Yale and other medical schools provide writing, art, and music programs to give students a venue to process their emotions and relieve their stress. Their artwork is stunning and poignant. K-12 schools fostered their artistic expression.

How important is it for students to develop their affective side while learning the science of medicine? Recall your own interactions with clinicians. Likely, some were highly skilled but emotionally detached and business-like. Often, those clinicians fail to make an empathic connection with their patients. Others, equally skilled make that empathic connection. How was it for you when you felt heard and cared for by your clinician? It has been demonstrated that empathic clinicians elicit more complete patient histories, which aids diagnosis. Treatments often fail because the patient did not understand the treatment plan. Again, empathic clinicians are more successful in explaining to patients what they must do.

Because of the value of arts and humanities, leading medical schools like Yale favor applicants with strong backgrounds in these disciplines. Yale could fill its entire class with straight A science majors or with PhD scientists. Instead, Yale looks for well-rounded students capable of becoming empathic physicians and allied health professionals.

I speak of the importance of the arts for medical training, but isn't also true for any number of professions, including police, fire fighters, and emergency personnel? Think deeply about your own work as legislators. Even if you are not a skilled artist, I'll bet you developed an appreciation for the arts beginning with your K-12 education. You may not appreciate it, because it became an integral part of who you are – even if you didn't like it when you were in school. It helps you put people first in your service to them.

Thank you for considering this testimony. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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