

February 10, 2021

Dear Connecticut State Legislature,

As a member of the arts community in Connecticut, I am submitting this testimony in support of H.B. 6119. I am an artist as well as an arts administrator serving as the Director of Community Impact at the Greater Hartford Arts Council and a commissioner for the Commission on Cultural Affairs for the City of Hartford.

On a daily basis I see the impact the arts have on the lives of people in Connecticut and specifically in the Greater Hartford region. The arts are an economic driver. When residents and visitors attend a performance or visit a museum, they are contributing to the economy beyond the performing arts venues, historic homes, and museums. Pre-COVID I would attend live, local music performances more than once a week at the many restaurants that present live music in the Hartford area. It was a vital part of my social life, my work life, and a way that I contributed to the economy. If I was enjoying Monday Night Jazz at Black Eyed Sally's, I was definitely doing that with a pint a beer and a snack with many friends who were doing the same.

Artists and people who wouldn't even identify themselves as creative can a platform to express themselves through the arts in a way that no other medium can. The arts heal and unite like nothing else. Studies have shown the measureable impact to the arts on our physical and mental health. When the arts thrive, community thrives and vice versa.

The arts also provide around 59,000 jobs, including my own. As an arts administrator, I see the organizations and individual artists in our state struggling with the uncertainty of their futures. The pandemic has devastated the arts ecosystem. The ripple effect leaches beyond the sector itself. Restaurants, small businesses, and transportation are all seeing and feeling the impact of the lack of in-person arts program. This shows that the arts are vital to the tapestry of our state. They are not just nice to have, they are necessary. Funding for the arts and culture sector was insufficient before the pandemic. Failing to take action to increasing revenue to the Tourism Fund will put more than the arts sector into deeper peril.

Sustainable, increased funding is needed and that is why I 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"

The music I listen to while I clean my house, the shows I binge watched through the shutdown, the connections I've maintained with my arts community friends, and the moments of inspiration I muster up in order to make my own art have filled my cup during the pandemic. I ask the committee to consider how the arts are woven into your daily lives and that you support the above recommendations in H.B. 6119 to help fill the cup of the Tourism Fund. Additional action will need to be taken, but this is a critical step towards recovery that will be felt by everyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amanda Roy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Amanda Roy

Bloomfield, Connecticut