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In testimonial and support for House Bill 6119...

It is important to invest in the arts. Plain and simple. Communities ripe with artistic influence flourish. Children, when exposed to music, dance, and liberal arts flourish. When arts related events are curated in a town, the town's small businesses flourish. Investing in the arts is a win for every party involved.

I graduated from Daniel Hand High School in 2019 and currently attend University of Miami's Frost School of Music. I have friends at Berklee College of Music, Eastman School of Music, The New School, UCONN School of Fine Arts, Carnegie Mellon College of Fine Arts, and other music and art schools around the country. If not for the investments my town made in the school systems and organizations like the Shoreline Arts Alliance and Arts Barn, we would not be where we are today.

Interning at the SAA gave me necessary skills and exposure to what it is like running not just an arts organization but also a non-profit; this experience in an organization like this is not just relegated to artists and musicians, it is available to anyone. What many people do not know is that it is organizations like the SAA who help organize many of the arts related events that we see on our town greens and downtown sidewalks. The service they provide not only enriches the culture of the town, but also fuels economic development in the form of shopping local. Without funding, many children, adults (artists or not), and small businesses miss out on opportunities and valuable experiences like these.

It is no secret that COVID-19 has left many arts and music venues in dire need of resources in order to survive. What people often forget is that by investing in venues and organizations in times like these, you are not giving money to be used for shows and concerts. This money is going to the people who put these events on, people who are doing it not just because they love the arts, but because they need to make a living. For example, this past summer, House and Senate Democrats in the Federal Government pushed to pass bills allocating funds to various institutions like the Kennedy Center in New York City and the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. There was pushback from Republicans, citing this as a ploy by Democrats to get what they want, for them and these venues to fund vanity projects. However, that is farther from the true intention than anything. The Kennedy Center and Kimmel Center have administrators, marketing departments, finance departments, ushers, ticket booth operators, stage hands, lighting crews and many more who need pay. The funds allocated were going to them, not to "vanity projects". In addition, many performers - be it opera singers, symphony musicians, and conductors - also have contracts with these venues. Without funding, they do not get paid either, and during a time of minimal live performance, these people are struggling.

All these people mentioned are no different from those who work in banks, retail, manufacturing, and any other job that people think of as typical day to day life. Funding arts

based tourist events, concerts, art exhibits, and non-profit organizations give these artists, musicians, administrators, and entrepreneurs the fair share in which they are severely lacking. If you do not believe in funding the arts to their fair share, then I implore you to stop listening to music, stop watching TV, stop going to all the cute little family events on your town green. That should give you an appreciation for how important arts and music are in our society. The arts are an extremely important facet of culture in our towns, and in Connecticut, a state rich with art history, it is part of our identity. House Bill 6119 gives appropriate funding and voice to more than just local events and organizations. It gives breath to our culture and way of life.