

Yale PEABODY MUSEUM  
*of Natural History*

February 10, 2021

State of Connecticut  
House of Representatives  
Legislative Office Building 300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
RE: HB 6119: An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding

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Dear House of Representatives,

I am writing in support of HB 6119: An Act Concerning Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding, proposing an increase of the allocation of the Hotel Occupancy Tax for cultural purposes from 10% to 25%. This bill would maintain critical support of the humanities, arts and tourism sectors during these unprecedented times and dramatically increase vital support in a post-COVID world.

As you are well aware, the current Occupancy tax averages \$110 million per year that previously supported the Connecticut General Fund. More recently the State established the "Tourism Fund" that invested in the arts, culture and tourism industries across the State. This redirection in funding has provided a stable source of revenue for our tourism industry by providing approximately \$13 million per year. However, overall funding to arts and tourism has decreased dramatically over the last decade and sadly the pandemic has not only just devastated the tourism industry, it has decimated the Occupancy tax! It is estimated, by OPM, that the fund will be short by \$14 million by June 2021.

This proposed bill would revise the name of the fund to "Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund" and increase the allocation of the tax to 25%. In a "normal" year this would provide an addition \$20 million to arts/culture and tourism. Not only would this provide desperately needed funding for next year, it would also help keep the overall fund in balance and create sustainability.

Organizations such as Connecticut Humanities have been able to direct funding into the arts, culture and tourism industry and has become a vital lifeline especially during these tough times. The Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History has been a direct recipient of funding from Connecticut Humanities for several public programs and exhibits at the Museum for nearly a decade! Specially, Connecticut Humanities has supported our "Egyptomania" exhibition; "Samurai" exhibition; "From the Ends of the Earth" exhibition; poetry slams, film series events, student-lead exhibitions and, more recently, our "Ancient Mesopotamia Speaks: Highlights from the Yale Babylonian Collection" exhibition, one of the last exhibits on display prior to the Museum closing for our comprehensive renovation project, and work with our consultant on diversity, inclusions, access and equity issues within our renovated galleries.

I hope you will all consider supporting this bill.

Thank you,



David Skelly  
Director, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History  
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