

TO: MEMBERS, CONNECTICUT LEGISLATURE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

FROM: SUSAN SWEITZER, TRUSTEE OF THE LOCKWOOD MATHEWS MANSION MUSEUM AT NORWALK, CT, 295 WEST AVENUE, NORWALK CT and RESIDENT OF NEW CANAAN, CT

RE: **SUPPORT FOR H.B.6119 TOURISM FUND ALLOCATION INCREASE**

DATE: FEBRUARY, 10, 2021

I am submitting this testimony at your Public Hearing to consider the increase of the CT hotel and lodging tax from 10% to 25% to provide additional support for the Tourism Fund. Aside from the obvious need at the present time for arts, cultural and tourism industry venues to survive the pandemic, this is an opportunity to acknowledge the role of this sector in the Connecticut economy. It is well-known that this economic segment is a key driver of visitor traffic both intra-State and inter-State, a source of income to the derivative sectors of lodging, restaurant and retail. Arts, Culture and Tourism must survive to assure a robust sector post-pandemic.

There is perhaps less general recognition of the direct and indirect economic value these community-based organizations bring to our towns and cities. In addition to employment opportunities, these organizations are significant purchasers of local goods and services including catering, printing, graphic design, cleaning, insurance, rental space, landscaping, artists and often strong marketing partners for the private sector. These organizations provide extraordinary educational and cultural resources to local and regional schools.

Representing the Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum, the largest and most significant house museum in Connecticut, I would urge you to approve the proposed increase to the CT hotel and lodging tax, affirm the extraordinary current and future value of arts, culture and tourism in Connecticut communities and seize this opportunity to provide additional support both in the immediate threat environment and also to assure the future growth of this sector.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Susan Sweitzer