



DATE: February 8, 2021  
TO: Commerce Committee  
FROM: Amy Wynn, Executive Director, American Mural Project  
RE: Proposed H.B. 6119 An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding

Senator Hartley, Representative Simmons, Senator Cohen, Representative Rochelle and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee,

My name is Amy Wynn. I am a resident of Falls Village, CT and Executive Director of the American Mural Project in Winsted, CT. I am also a member of the board of the Connecticut Arts Alliance. I urge you to support Bill 6119, an Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding.

As one who has worked in the arts in Connecticut for over 20 years, both state-wide, regionally and locally, I regularly see the positive impact that the arts and cultural treasures have on communities, and also recognize the important value of tourism to our state's economy and pride.

At the American Mural Project (AMP), where I currently work, young people are engaged in creative learning in a variety of programs, in-person and virtually. Their experiences through the arts education programs at AMP change how they see the possibilities for themselves in the world. The inspiration of AMP's mural and the experiences of the programs are enriching at the very least, and ,occasionally, life changing.

One of our program participants, a community college student said: "AMP's Digital Story Work program taught me the importance of interviewing and the art of collaboration. AMP inspired me to become a more active member of the community and provided me with a new lens to view the world. The biggest lesson I learned was the concept of diversity, and the importance and value of the workforce. This program influenced me to work in a position that will help others find their own voices, by creating more empowerment through storytelling." She is working now as a social worker in CT.

A Winsted parent whose son participated in AMP's afterschool and summer programs shared that: her 9-year-old son didn't enjoy sports as much as his peers. She said that "AMP is where Evan was able to really start to narrow in on what his passions are. Evan learned so much at AMP like how to take objects apart and rebuild them into something super cool. He was able to be a free spirit and draw whatever it was he was feeling that day and then talk about it in front of his peers. From this I now have SUCH an artist at home. AMP offers something kids don't do as much as they should, and that's art, whatever it is that art means to them."

The arts also have a tremendous impact on people's mental well-being, which has become especially important with the isolation that COVID has brought on. With virtual and physically distant outdoor programs, AMP and other arts organizations have continued to keep people emotionally afloat. COVID has been traumatizing for many, and the arts can help soothe and heal that trauma.

COVID has devastated a key portion of our state's economy as well with lost jobs in the creative sector and closures, reducing a multitude of revenue streams. The creative sector, which is the cornerstone of Tourism, is a \$9.9 billion dollar industry in CT, according to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, and, singling out the arts, studies show that for every dollar Connecticut spends, the state receives over \$7 in tax revenue. Economically, the arts are, and will be, an important part of the economic recovery for Connecticut.

It is timely and strategic that Bill 6119's changes in the lodging tax allocation to the Arts Culture Tourism fund be made now, more than ever, due to the huge depletion of the fund at the current allocation level, and due to the tremendous positive impact that this sector can have on Connecticut's recovery on so many levels.

I urge the Commerce Committee to support HB 6119 to ensure that Arts, Culture and Tourism are able to realize their full potential for Connecticut's imminent recovery and productive future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Amy Wynn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Amy Wynn, Executive Director  
American Mural Project