



February 10, 2021

The Honorable State Senator Joan Hartley and State Representative Caroline Simmons  
Commerce Committee | Legislative Office Building | 300 Capitol Avenue | Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Members of the Commerce Committee,

My name is Rufus de Rham, Executive Director of the Warner Theatre in Torrington, CT. I am writing today in support of bill number HB 6119 An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding as a critical piece of legislation that will support and sustain these crucial economic sectors.

Supporting HB 6119 An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding will result in the following:

- Increasing the percentage of the lodging tax from 10 to 25% will help prevent further economic injury, address the impact of the shutdown, and accelerate the recovery of our towns and cities that are supported by the economic driver that is the Arts, Culture and Tourism industry.
- Fixing the allocation of 60% to tourism funding and 40% to arts and culture funding reflects how the fund is currently distributed and is supported by groups from both sectors.
- Changing the name of the Tourism Fund to the Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund more accurately describes the role of the fund in supporting these crucial sectors.
- It does not take funding away from other legislative priorities, nor will it increase taxes. It is a way that the legislative body can support our industry during the immediate recovery and provide sustainable support in the long term.

This is important as a leader of an arts organization that serves rural Northwest Connecticut. We generate \$8.1 million dollars of economic activity supporting 121 FTE jobs. We serve over 80,000 patrons a year, 96% of whom are Connecticut residents. We are a vital part of the economic infrastructure and the cultural heart of Northwest Connecticut. State support allows us to fulfill our role as an educator, convener and presenter and allows us to leverage this public support with private donations.

COVID has decimated the arts industry, which represents 5% of the state's economy and generates \$9 billion of economic activity. We are vital to Connecticut's recovery efforts, and a partner in the effort to attract new residents and businesses to our towns and cities. I encourage you to support this bill and support a brighter future for Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Rufus de Rham (he/him/his) | Executive Director | Warner Theatre

**Your Destination for Arts, Culture & Quality Entertainment!**

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