

Testimony in support of the Tourism Fund

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Danielle Chesebrough and I am the First Selectman of the Town of Stonington. I am here tonight to ask for you to consider increasing revenue to the tourism fund, which would be renamed the Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund going forward when HB 6119 is hopefully passed this year. I also wanted to thank all of you with us today for the ongoing public service to our State.

I very much appreciate the challenges you have before you, and that is partly why I wanted to speak on behalf of this appropriation. This aspect of the budget is unique in that it shouldn't compete with other priority programs- such as homeless services or open space conservation; it should help pay for them.

Looking first at Tourism, a [2017 study on the Economic Impact of Tourism in Connecticut](#), found that each household in Connecticut would need to be taxed an additional \$705 to replace the state and local taxes generated by visitors in 2017.

Looking across that nation, according to a [study by US Travel Association in 2013](#), travel and tourism generated \$60.9 billion in tax revenues to state and local governments. This was enough to cover the wages of all police officers and firefighters in the entire nation, or the salaries of nearly 100 percent of all secondary school teachers in all 50 states.

A [2012 study](#) the State put forward further emphasized that the more as we increased our tourism funding, the stronger our return on investment. It concluded that the Tourism Fund was clearly a revenue generator, and not a cost to taxpayers.

Taking a deeper look at Arts and Culture- according to the 2017 [Arts & Economic Prosperity 5](#) study, conducted by [Americans for the Arts](#), which examined fiscal year 2015- Connecticut's nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$797.3 million in annual economic activity in the state, supporting over 23,000 full-time equivalent jobs and generating \$72.3 million in local and state government revenues. In addition, event-related spending by Arts and Cultural audiences totaled \$281.9 million in CT.

Tourism, Arts and Culture combined represents 15% of CT's economy, but also so much more.

They are an integral part of the quality of life that draws people not only to visit our great State, but also to live here- to start their careers, raise a family or retire here. These are also industries that has been hard hit by the pandemic. Ensuring adequate funding will help ensure that these important businesses and organizations remain a vibrant part of the fabric of our shared communities. It will help large cities across our state, and also the smaller towns and villages. I thank you for your time and consideration.