



February 18, 2021

Testimony for Governor's Proposed FY22 + FY23 Budget for  
Conservation and Development Agencies, HB 6439: MUSIC HAVEN

Dear Co-Chair Senator Osten, Co-Chair Rep. Walker, Vice-Chair Senator Hartley, Vice-Chair Rep. Dathan, Vice-Chair Rep. Nolan, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am submitting this testimony for HB 6439 on behalf of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, a nonprofit service organization that amplifies, empowers, and unites artists, creative organizations, and residents. Our region's creative ecosystem produces \$135 million in direct economic activity, supports 5,600 full-time equivalent jobs, and attracts 700,000 attendees annually ([source](#)). Artists and creative organizations have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, but are critical for restoring social connections, building cultural equity and racial justice, and supporting vibrant, healthy communities.

To be specific, the pandemic has devastated Connecticut's creative economy, losing an estimated \$2.4B in revenue with unemployment or underemployment reaching 60% ([source](#)). The federal government, private foundations, and donors have made critical investments to help our sector, but the economic crisis is far from over. The state must provide significant support now to avert dire consequences.

**The Arts Council hopes that the Appropriations Committee will continue to invest in Music Haven with \$100,000 per year.** Two years ago, this committee added Music Haven to the list of arts, culture, and tourism organizations that receive a direct line item through the Tourism Fund. However, they were the only organization included in just the first of the two year budget.

Last year, Music Haven families and arts organizations in our region joined forces to ask this committee to adjust the budget and continue to provide Music Haven with \$100,000 per year. Many of my colleagues [joined the Arts Council](#) in submitting supportive testimony (including [Arte](#), [New Haven Symphony Orchestra](#), [International Festival of Arts & Ideas](#), and [Neighborhood Music School](#)). A few weeks later, the pandemic abruptly ended the legislative session and the budget was not updated to reflect this decision.

To be clear, **these direct line item earmarks are not a standard or equitable practice for investing in arts organizations.** I [recently authored an op-ed](#) to emphasize this issue and highlighted Music Haven as a key example of why this structure is flawed. However, until this structure is improved, Music Haven depends on this support because all of their programs are provided at no cost to the low-income, Black

and Brown children in New Haven they serve. In fact, they are the only organization that receives a direct line item that prioritizes anti-racism and cultural equity in all aspects of their work. Their students represent the future of our region and our creative industry. Without question, they deserve this level of support from the state.

Given that the Tourism Fund is a special fund, I hope you will immediately confirm your commitment to providing Music Haven annually with \$100,000 in the 2022 and 2023 budgets. I also hope you will transition to a more standard and equitable process for providing arts organizations with operating support grants through the CT Office of the Arts in the future.

Thanks for your enduring support for the power of arts, culture and for considering this recommendation. I would be happy to answer any additional questions as your process continues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Fitzmaurice', written in a cursive style.

Daniel Fitzmaurice  
*Executive Director*