



February 18, 2021

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Executive Director

Dear Co-Chair Senator Osten, Co-Chair Representative Walker, Vice-Chair Senator Hartley, Vice-Chair Representative Dathan, Vice-Chair Representative Nolan, Ranking Member Senator Miner, Ranking Member Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is David Green and I am submitting this testimony, on behalf of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County, in support of the Governor's budget proposal to replenish the Tourism Fund, devastated during the pandemic, to a pre-pandemic level, with resources from the General Fund.

The Cultural Alliance is a membership coalition of over 550 nonprofit, for-profit, and individual artist members across coastal Fairfield County, from Greenwich to Shelton. We provide marketing, professional development and advocacy services, connecting members to one another and to their publics, consciously weaving together our cultural infrastructure and demonstrating its power.

During the pandemic we have had even greater contact with our members: holding weekly community conversations on Zoom for members to share their situations and concerns. These have included: the bridge loans, PPPs, the shared work program, Pandemic Unemployment Insurance for gig workers, virtual fundraising, crisis financial planning, sustainable virtual programming, reopening requirements, and the threat of permanent closures. These and other issues have been thrashed out, information shared and recommendations made. In addition, since last March, we have conducted three [county-wide surveys](#) to measure the losses suffered.

We study and promote the interconnectedness of our arts and culture ecosystem with the economic landscape of our region. As I trust you all realize, arts and culture is an industry with a very high return on investment - at least \$3 (and some report as much as \$7) return for every dollar invested. Our 2016 report on the [Arts and Economic Prosperity of Fairfield County](#) showed *nonprofit* arts and culture organizations and their audiences spent at least \$235 million, generated \$20 million in state and local government revenue, and supported at least 6,789 FTE jobs in our county in 2015.

This activity, and this impact, has taken a devastating pounding with the pandemic. Statewide, this sector lost \$2.4 billion in sales, over 33,000 jobs, and \$400 million in revenue.

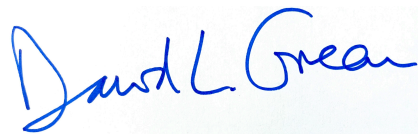
We are all grateful that the Governor and DECD Commissioner recognize the value of our industry, and the degree to which it has suffered during the pandemic, by having awarded \$10.5 million of emergency Federal CARES Act funding to the Office of the Arts and CTHumanities (both of which fund us). But this is not enough.

This sector, this industry, needs greater investment. It needs both further emergency relief funding, to enable it to recover and contribute to the recovery of the state, plus increased and sustained investment in the future, to enable it to flourish and sustain its contribution to a vibrant Connecticut. We need further recognition of the critical role our arts and culture industry plays in the recovery and rebuilding of our state - not only in its *economic* recovery but also in the emotional and mental health recovery and restoration of our citizens.

The Tourism Fund is CT's chief investment mechanism for the arts, culture and tourism. As you may know, the fund is estimated to end FY 2021 with a negative \$9.8 million balance, and revenues from the hotel occupancy tax are not projected to rebound to pre-pandemic levels until FY 2023. The Governor's budget includes \$12.9 million in support of the Tourism Fund to maintain the venues and attractions that contribute to the state's economy as well as our quality of life.

To set this industry up on the right path, as the pandemic recedes, we ask you please to support this vital component of the Governor's budget. Furthermore, we ask that, in order to stabilize arts, culture and tourism funding, you increase and diversify the funding of the Tourism Fund by allocating portions of proceeds from other state taxes, or portions of new revenue streams, into the Tourism Fund.

Sincerely



David Green
Executive Director