



Music Haven empowers and connects young people through exceptional tuition-free music education, mentoring, and performance by our resident musicians in the heart of New Haven, giving all kids a chance to play.

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Haven String Quartet

- Yaira Matyakubova, *violin*
- Gregory Tompkins, *violin*
- Annalisa Boerner, *viola*
- Philip Boulanger, *cello*

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State of CT Legislative Bldg.
Appropriations Committee
300 Capitol Ave
Hartford CT 06001

February 18, 2021

Appropriations Committee: Conservation & Development Public Hearing, Friday, February 19, 2021

Re: MUSIC HAVEN, HB 06439

Dear Committee Members:

A year ago, more than 30 people (listed here: https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/CommDocTmy.asp?comm_code=app&date=02/11/2020) submitted testimony in support of Music Haven’s inclusion in the DECD budget. That list doesn’t include the countless phone calls and emails sent by our students, families, and supporters, so many calls of support, in fact, “that (Rep.) DiMassa joked that Music Haven had shut down the Capitol’s switchboard.” (<https://www.newhavenarts.org/arts-paper/articles/arts-army-rallies-to-keep-music-haven-in-state-budget>). At the conclusion of that public hearing, we were told—in reference to our line in the budget that the committee would “make sure it’s put back.”

Last week, we discovered that never happened.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES, REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
By Appropriation, Character and Fund in \$ Thousands

	Actual FY 2020	Estimated FY 2021	Requested FY 2022	Curr. Services FY 2022	Total FY 2022	Requested FY 2023	Curr. Services FY 2023	Total FY 2023
16257 - Performing Theaters Grant	338	382	382	382	382	382	382	382
16258 - Arts Commission	1,497	1,497	1,497	1,497	1,497	1,497	1,497	1,497
16262 - Art Museum Consortium	287	287	287	287	287	287	287	287
16264 - Litchfield Jazz Festival	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
16267 - Arte Inc.	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
16268 - CT Virtuosi Orchestra	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
16269 - Barnum Museum	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
16275 - Various Grants	394	394	394	394	394	394	394	394
16277 - CT Open	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16281 - Creative Youth Productions	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
16282 - Music Haven	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17063 - Greater Hartford Arts Council	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74
17065 - Stepping Stones Museum for Children	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31
17066 - Maritime Center Authority	304	304	304	304	304	304	304	304
17069 - Connecticut Humanities Council	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	850
17070 - Amistad Committee for the Freedom Trail	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
17072 - New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas	415	415	415	415	415	415	415	415
17073 - New Haven Arts Council	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
17075 - Beardsley Zoo	254	254	254	254	254	254	254	254
17076 - Mystic Aquarium	322	322	322	322	322	322	322	322
17078 - Northwestern Tourism	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
17079 - Eastern Tourism	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
17080 - Central Tourism	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
17082 - Twin/Stowe Homes	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81
17100 - Cultural Alliance of Fairfield	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
17106 - Stamford Downtown Special Services District	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
TOTAL - TOURISM FUND	13,126	13,070	13,070	13,070	13,070	13,070	13,070	13,070

In normal times, we could have a whole bus full of young musicians and their families pack the hearing room. But right now, beyond the limitations of COVID restrictions we are all experiencing, our Music Haven families are dealing disproportionately with all of the problems caused by the pandemic--job loss, illness, and the loss of family members to this pandemic. Ninety percent of our students are Black and/or Latinx, and the vast majority are from low-income families. Forty percent speak a language other than English at home. Many are new immigrants and recent refugee arrivals to New Haven. Yet some of them still--on 2 day's notice--submitted testimony and signed up to testify at this public hearing. This is despite the inaccessibility of this process--for example, requiring attachments as pdfs or word docs rather than just email submissions, the difficulty of navigating the sign-up process, all of which speak to the inequity of this whole system of allocating arts funding. Nonetheless, Music Haven managed to mobilize our allies and "get on the list" two years ago. And here we are, fighting for our funding again for the 3rd year in a row.

Through this pandemic year, this year we have been removed from the budget, we have continued to keep our 100% free program going stronger than ever:

- pivoting to online programming (which first required getting laptops and wifi access to many of our students)
- providing support for basic needs like food support and connections to mental health services,
- checking in on a weekly basis with all of our students, on top of our usual one-on-one lessons, group classes, and community building activities.
- added improvisation and music technology and culturally-responsive music history classes and a college pathways program

We've deepened rather than cut back our programming.

Our students have continued to show up through their computer screens, day after day, and they've continued to practice and figure out ways to play music together despite every imaginable obstacle.

In the midst of all of this, finding out we've been cut out of the state budget--again--is a devastating blow. Especially since we were told we were going to be included. I don't know what happened, but I'm hoping this was simply a mistake or a process that fell through the cracks because of COVID, and that it's something that can be fixed.

We are a small team trying to do a lot with very little. Many of our students and their families are doing even more with even less. To quote one parent, "Words can not describe what Music Haven has meant for us during this time." Despite being cut out of the budget, we've not only continued our work, but done so much more. Our families deserve an investment from the State of Connecticut in this program that they love and on which they rely.

I urge you to refer to the many testimonies that were submitted this time last year. I know many more have been submitted this time around as well. I don't believe we need to make this case again--this committee found everyone's testimony compelling enough last time around to assure us

we would be included in the budget this year--which for other organizations on this budget line has traditionally led to inclusion in future years. I'm unclear why this would be any different for us.

Since we were assured we would be put back in the budget a year ago, we have continued to do the same important work, and then some, documented well in this story:

<https://www.newhavenarts.org/arts-paper/articles/music-haven-pulls-back-the-curtain>

I urge this committee, and the Governor's budget team, to figure out how to follow through on the promise that was made to us and to our 80 young musicians, and to restore Music Haven's \$100,000 budget allocation in the DECD budget for this year and subsequent budget years, until such time as the state changes the way it allocates arts funding and shifts towards a more transparent, equitable, and accessible model.

For example, the only arts grant available through the Office of the Arts that is specifically aimed at addressing access and inclusivity in the arts has a maximum award of \$3000. Meanwhile, many large arts organizations throughout the state that predominantly serve white and wealthy constituencies receive six-figure allocations through this process, and have for decades. Currently 70% of arts dollars in CT are funded through this line-item process, which--as our experience demonstrates--is inaccessible and inequitable, and favors large institutions with political power, influential constituencies, and lobbying / advocacy resources. The result is approximately 70% of arts funding in CT (especially if you remove Music Haven's line item) goes to large arts institutions that do not serve low-income communities and communities of color, and do not expand access to the arts or--as their core mission--promote racial equity in the arts.

To be clear, we are not asking to be *added* as a new line item. We were already added as a new line in the budget in 2019/2020. We were assured following last year's public hearing that our funding would continue in the budget this year, and it was not. We ask that you restore our funding in this budget line, and also consider what the future of the arts could look like in our state if the funding was allocated in a more equitable and inclusive way.

Thank you.



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