

State of Connecticut Legislative Building
Appropriations Committee
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06001

February 18, 2021

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

Re: Music Haven, HB 06439

Dear Committee Members:

When was the last time you listened to a stirring rendition of "La Despedida" by Felipe Gutierrez y Espinosa? When was the last time you heard a performance so authentic and endearing you felt a real connection to the musicians? My six-year-old daughter and I had the fabulous opportunity to hear this piece featuring the cello and viola just this past Saturday, February 13. "That was awesome, Mom!" said my six-year-old. "And they are Brown like me!" she shouted – eyes wide and full of fascination and delight.

My daughter and I watched and listened to 13-year-old Jackie on the cello and 16-year-old Jocelyn on the viola play this historical piece of music. They are sisters and Music Haven student musicians, and *they were awesome*.

I write this testimony because of Music Haven's state funding omission in the Governor's budget, and I ask that you restore the \$100,000 funding. Music Haven has a positive impact on people far beyond the students, staff, and New Haven. They work to increase equitable access to classical music for youth, providing them with tuition-free music lessons, including removing the barriers that prevent them from being successful musicians, such as providing help with homework, Chromebooks for the virtual music lessons, and mentorship.

Most of the students served by Music Haven are Black and Brown, like my family—like my daughter. When she sees a student musician, she sees herself and wants to know when she can start playing the cello. That is the positive ripple effect Music Haven has throughout Connecticut.

Music Haven is terrific, and I am honored to be a member of its Board of Directors. I witnessed first-hand an organization that did not miss a beat transitioning from in-person music lessons and concerts to all-things virtual. Today, the children are thriving and learning new mediums. Music Haven centered the children's well-being during this pandemic, and the student musicians know how important they are because they are experiencing the support. Do not take this away.

Unfortunately, this oversight is a repeat episode from last year and described in this article from *The Arts Paper* – ["Arts Army Rallies To Keep Music Haven In State Budget."](#) One thing is clear, music and the arts are a right – not a privilege. Every child should have equitable access to music and the arts. Every child should have access to musical instruments. Every child should be able to learn how to play classical music on the instrument of their choice. Music Haven provides this access year after year. Please restore the \$100,000 in the Connecticut state budget for Music Haven so they may continue to do so.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony on behalf of Music Haven.

Kafi Rouse
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