

Testimony of:
John A. Taylor Jr.

In Support of House Bill 06439

To Chairs Olsen and Walker, Members of the New Haven Legislative Delegation- Candelaria, Dillon, Porter and Winfield, and to all Members of the Appropriation Committee:

My Name is John Taylor. I am the Executive Director of the Booker T. Washington Academy located at 804 State Street in New Haven, Connecticut. I reside at 101 Birchwood Drive in Hamden, Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Music Haven and in response to the Governor's Proposed Budget.

I support Music Haven because I have seen firsthand the impact of their work on the students they serve. I proudly sit on the Music Haven Board of Trustees because of its commitment to serving students from under-resourced communities, most of whom are black and brown, providing them with tuition-free music lessons, homework help, and mentorship- adding significant value to their overall development into well-rounded and competent young adults.

I was dismayed to hear that state funding for Music Haven has been removed from the Governor's budget- especially so, given the significance of \$100,000 to the Music Haven budget, representing 20 percent of the total budget for the year. To not receive this funding can have a catastrophic impact on the long term viability of this organization- which would deal a tremendous blow to the New Haven Arts Community, given the high quality access to the Arts that Music Haven provides for the students it serves.

I am a huge believer in ensuring equitable access to opportunity for all students, regardless of their race or economic background, as the means through which to level the playing field and to actively demonstrate our real commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. And I know from personal experience that every single member of the New Haven Legislative Delegation shares in this commitment, as I suspect all members of this committee do as well. But, I have always been told that our values are reflected in our spending choices. What does the exclusion of Music Haven from the budget say about our values? Does it suggest that we value students from economically disadvantaged communities less than their more affluent peers? Should not every student have equitable access to music and the arts? Should not every student be afforded the opportunity to find their passion? Or is finding the thing that gives a young person pleasure and fulfillment a luxury that only the rich can enjoy?

So, I submit this testimony to remind Members of the Appropriation Committee not to forget about Music Haven and to ask that you do whatever it takes to correct this oversight. On behalf of the Music Haven Board of Director, I thank you. The staff and parents thank you. And most importantly, the students thank you.

Draft