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GOVERNOR

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE**  
**March 11, 2008**

M. Jodi Rell  
Governor  
State of Connecticut

Testimony Supporting H.B. No. 5024:  
An Act Establishing a Cultural Treasures Account

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Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, Senator Debicella, Representative Stripp and honorable members of the Commerce Committee, I am submitting testimony in support of House Bill 5024 – An Act Establishing a Cultural Treasures Account. Preserving and enhancing Connecticut’s culture and character are of primary importance to our quality of life and our economy.

The Cultural Treasures program seeks to make an unprecedented investment in Connecticut’s arts, culture and tourism organizations, institutions and individuals by creating a non-lapsing funding source to be administered by the Commission on Culture & Tourism. As you may know, I recommended an appropriation increase of \$3.6 million, which will provide a total of \$10 million to the Commission to be awarded among its diverse constituents, large and small. In fact, the bill mandates the distribution of at least 25% of the fund’s proceeds nonprofit arts and cultural institutions, organizations and individuals that have annual operating budgets of less than \$1 million.

House Bill 5024 sets forth the criteria the Commission will consider in awarding these funds, which are the cultural merit, financial strength, management accountability, community involvement, historic value and the percentage of state funds compared to nongovernmental funds of each applicant. These criteria will ensure the accountability of the organizations and institutions receiving state support, encourage the leveraging of public funds to earn private funds, support these organizations’ long-term stability and ensure the responsible investment of public funds.

Providing additional grant funding to the arts, culture and tourism institutions, organizations and individuals will help the state and the Commission to position Connecticut’s cultural and tourism assets to attract and engage audiences and to increase their ability to serve, educate and inspire our own residents and visitors, young and old. Engaged audiences mean increased visitation and continued support of these organizations.

Culture, tourism and arts are so much a part of what makes a visit to Connecticut an unforgettable experience. We must continue to invest in our culture and history for future generations. Please join me in supporting this very important initiative. Thank you.