



Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

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

*Karen J. Senich, Executive Director*  
*Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism*

**Testimony Supporting**

**House Bill 5024**

**AN ACT CONCERNING ESTABLISHING A CULTURAL TREASURES ACCOUNT**

Arts  
Tourism  
Film  
History

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Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee: my name is Karen J. Senich and I am the Executive Director for the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, whose mission is to preserve and promote all of Connecticut's cultural and tourism assets in order to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of the state. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 5024 - An Act Concerning Establishing A Cultural Treasures Account.

House Bill 5024 would create the Cultural Treasures Account which would be a separate, non lapsing account within the General Fund dedicated to providing grants to individuals, institutions and organizations for creating, preserving, promoting and expanding arts, tourism and cultural activities in the state.

In awarding the funds, the Commission shall consider, among other factors, the cultural merit, financial strength, management accountability, community involvement, visitors per year, number of students served, historic value and the percentage of state funds compared to nongovernmental funds. These criteria, similar to the criteria that the Commission currently considers in determining grant awards, 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.

Connecticut's arts, cultural, heritage and tourism organizations contribute greatly to the state's economic vitality. Annually, these organizations contribute over \$14 billion to our economy and account for over 170,000 jobs, 10% of our labor force. Stabilizing, enhancing and expanding our cultural and tourism organizations and institutions will ensure their long-term contribution to our economy.

And it is not just about the economy, it is about education and our children's future. The arts are an essential element of learning; they motivate learning and creative thinking, improve the culture and climate of a school and inspire

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educators. Our history and heritage is unmatched – our children can learn and be inspired to learn where history actually took place. Our constituent organizations and institutions, whether historical, arts or tourism, are motivating and challenging our youth everyday with innovative and hands-on programs, on-site and in the schools. In the global economy that is driven by knowledge and ideas, education that inspires belongs at the forefront.

The Commission has awarded almost 1,000 grants to date this fiscal year. Included in those grants were almost 200 grants to educational institutions or for educational purposes.

Finally, our arts, culture and tourism organizations, institutions and individuals enrich our lives and define our quality of life in Connecticut - they make Connecticut an exciting, unique, relaxing and all around great state in which to live. Our quality of life keeps people and business in the state and draws people and business to the state.

As a state, we must recognize the contribution of these organizations by creating a dedicated source of revenue to provide them with the grants they deserve and need. The Cultural Treasures Account would go a long way in terms of this goal – to provide our constituents with grants that could make an even greater difference in terms of their programs and operations. The creation of a source of long term financial support for our arts and cultural organizations, institutions and individuals will boost attendance, create jobs and diversify the state's economy for the long term.

We believe that House Bill No. 5024, in establishing the Cultural Treasures Account, will allow the Commission to give real assistance to these organizations. I urge the members of this committee to vote favorably on the bill.