

# State of Connecticut

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**REPRESENTATIVE ELIZABETH "BETSY" B. RITTER**  
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**MEMBER**  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Testimony  
Commerce Committee

February 5, 2009

Proposed SB 253 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE GARDE ARTS CENTER IN NEW LONDON

Good afternoon Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, and members of the Committee on Commerce. I am Elizabeth Ritter, I represent the 38<sup>th</sup> House district, and I am here today to first thank you for raising Proposed SB 253 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE GARDE ARTS CENTER IN NEW LONDON and then to urge you to support passage of the bill.

The Garde Arts Center is located in downtown New London. This project, The Next Stage, is a \$16.8 million "ready to go" shovel-ready economic stimulus project that completes the last two phases of the Garde Master Plan approved by the State in 1993. The first two phases of this project - a \$14 million lobby expansion and theater restoration - were completed in 1999. This final stage will provide an immediate economic boost to New London and the region, remove long-standing threats to existing Garde facilities and operations, and increase significantly the quality and quantity of regional programs and services.

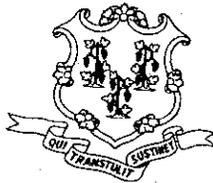
The Garde Arts Center, founded in 1985,

- is Eastern Connecticut's largest community-owned non-profit center for the performing arts
- owns and operates the nationally-acclaimed historic 1450-seat Garde Theater and adjacent buildings in downtown New London
- serves the region and state reaching 75,000 patrons, artists and students each year
- is the leading non-profit catalyst for the ongoing cultural and economic growth of the City of New London
- provides the premiere performance hall for the region's performing groups

- educates thousands of young people with performances, workshops, after-school and summer programs
- has a track record of success in completing major regional development projects

This project protects and enhances 23 years of public investment in the Garde facilities, builds upon the Garde's central role as a regional cultural and economic catalyst, and solidifies and deepens the role and impact of the Garde Arts Center as the premiere community-owned cultural institution in the Southeastern Connecticut. It will provide an estimated 81 FT construction jobs, produce an immediate economic impact estimated at \$17.9 million, and leave permanent jobs and businesses in downtown New London. Downtown restaurants, hotels, and businesses will be impacted by visiting artists and the attending public. Student access from regional schools will increase by 75% with daytime activities, rehearsal and performance spaces, and after-school and summer workshops.

Thank you very much for your attention and your support. I am available any time for questions.



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