

# DISCOVERY

MUSEUM AND PLANETARIUM



Remarks before the Appropriations Committee  
February 17, 2009  
Linda Malkin  
Executive Director, The Discovery Museum

*Attachments on  
File*

On behalf of The Discovery Museum, I would like to thank the State of Connecticut for its generous support of our organization. As some may recall, the Museum came very close to closing for good in 2004 after more than 40 years of service to the community. This support, provided through targeted grants from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, has served as a lifeline for our organization, allowing us to remain open for business while we put the pieces in place to accomplish a full recovery.

I am pleased to report that we have made substantial progress since those dark days of 2004. Revenues and targeted grant support for the Museum's educational programs has increased by more than 75% to over a million dollars annually, and a program of facility improvements, funded through both private and public contributions, has resulted in much needed upgrades to our classrooms, planetarium, children's space gallery, communication networks and physical plant.

In the past year, Discovery Museum educators provided over 2200 hours of science instruction to nearly 40,000 children from 50 Connecticut cities and towns, which translates to more than 7 hours of teaching each day the museum is open. With science now included on the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT), demand is way up for Discovery programs that address those specific science topics covered on the tests. We anticipate this demand to grow even more as school districts implement plans to increase science scores, which lag reading and math by 9% statewide and nearly 13% in the urban centers. In addition to offering programs, the Museum hosted three interactive science exhibits on topics ranging from environmental health to satellite technology, four small displays of work created by local and regional artists, and a moving tribute to the fallen soldiers of Connecticut who perished in Iraq and Afghanistan.

By national standards, The Discovery Museum's current level of government support is not excessive. Nationwide, science and technology centers receive 24.4% of their funding from the public. Discovery's public support currently stands at approximately 24%. Even within Bridgeport, our public funding is in line with other institutions, which have a portion of their expense budgets subsidized by the City. Because The Discovery Museum receives no such support from Bridgeport, we have relied on an annual operating grant through the Commission on Culture and Tourism to help make ends meet.

Today, I am here to ask for the State's continued support of our work in 2009 -10 at a level comparable to our current grant of \$475,000, and for that level of support to continue through 2010-11. Of course, we understand these are extremely difficult economic times, and are grateful for any funding, however, losses in our endowment and deep reductions in private funding opportunities will make the 50% cut proposed in the Governor's budget difficult for us to

bear, and given the severity of the current economic crisis, an additional cut of more than \$237,000 to zero public funding in the second year of the biennium would likely be devastating.

The Discovery Museum's science and technology mission and the work we do with local school districts to support science literacy for all children is perfectly aligned with our state's direction and needs in these challenging economic times. Career opportunities of the future remain in clean energy, healthcare, information technology and education, where knowledge of science and technology is critical. Tackling our state's achievement gap becomes even more important as job markets tighten, making it harder for people with marginal skills to find meaningful employment. With enrichment programs that target what young people need to know and be able to do in science reaching tens of thousands of children each year, and construction of the Discovery Magnet School, a 500 student pre-K to 8 interdistrict science magnet school on museum grounds, slated to begin construction this spring, The Discovery Museum is ready to do its part to bring about our region's future prosperity. We ask that you maintain our current funding level and appreciate your continued support through these challenging economic times.

Respectfully submitted  
on behalf of The Discovery Museum staff and Board of Trustees

Attachments:

Discovery Magnet School Overview  
Discovery Museum Facts  
2007-08 Annual Report