

Dear Members of the Conservation and Development Appropriations Subcommittee:

The State of Connecticut is faced with a difficult task this budget cycle. I encourage you to be visionary and strategic in your decisions. Funding for the arts should be a central platform for both parties. You have two issues to address:

- State funding for the arts
- Where the arts is "housed" in the State's organizational structure

My comments are in two parts:

- Macro assessment of State funding for the arts and its profile within the State
- Silvermine Guild Arts Center as a case study for State funding

### **Art Works for Connecticut's Economy**

In Connecticut, the arts are integral to high-impact economic development programs. Unlike other industries, the arts are thoroughly embedded in diverse aspects of Connecticut's economy: tourism, advertising and marketing, graphic, architectural and product design, as well as entertainment. Few industries can claim as profound an impact on the State as a whole. 71% of Connecticut residents participated in at least one of the arts (Rand, 1997 study). My guess is that the participation percentage – extraordinarily high – remains robust.

Connecticut is not at the top of the per capita spending on the arts, but it is part of our pride and identity. The creative economy attracts educated and civic-minded residents. Without our arts organizations, Connecticut becomes a very different state, with very different prospects. The close alternative is New York – why risk seeing part of \$14 billion flow to our neighboring state?

### **Art Works as an Investment**

When we say that the arts contributed \$14 billion in economic impact and support 44,000 people, we still don't have the whole picture of the impact of the arts in Connecticut.

### **Art Enriches Our lives**

Not only does a thriving cultural life generate income, jobs and tax revenue, more importantly it also creates a State where intangible needs are met—a State which becomes attractive not just as a destination but as a place to call home. The arts are worth it for their own sake.

Public arts funding is deeply valuable because it encourages societies to be diverse, intellectually alive, inquisitive and realistic. It furthers the discourse societies need to fully express their identity and place it in the rest of the world. It furthers our ability to

heal and help. It furthers our well being, freedom of expression, and pursuit of happiness. Public arts funding represents the deepest American ideals.

### **Art as the Centerpiece**

Connecticut has an opportunity to move ahead of its competitor states by making art the centerpiece of our economic recovery. As a centerpiece, the arts should have it's own commission. This is the visionary part that is unlikely to occur. Second place, is to have the arts coupled with tourism. It is interesting to note that Europeans use public funding to provide alternatives to the marketplace for cultural expression. This reinforces freedom of artistic expression and deeply enriches their societies. America's heavy reliance on the market as an arbiter of culture limits our options. Tourism is distinctly different from the arts. However, New York City found that without the arts, tourism was dead. That's when Rudy Giuliani, a staunch believer in less government, reinstated funding for cultural institutions in New York City.

The arts are fundamental to our lives. The State of Connecticut has an opportunity to move ahead of its competition. We have a fertile creative economy and studies have shown that art energizes the economy and is a draw for corporations and highly educated, high-income residents. Our budget woes are the result of many complex factors, merging the arts into economic development is not a solution.

### **Silvermine Guild Arts Center – Case Study**

We are a small business – roughly \$2 million in revenue. We receive \$56,000 from the State through General Operating Support and additional sums through the Endowment Fund. Importantly, we charge no admission. Our mission is to promote arts education in our community. Arts education and community over the past 80 years means serving art school students (10% come from New York State), our guild of artists, and the schools in Norwalk and Stamford. Unlike a commercial enterprise, SGAC returns 120% to our community. How do we do this? Tuition revenue, art sales and other earned revenue are roughly 80% of our revenue stream and 20% from contributions. Contributions fund the cost of our outreach program. The outreach program provides art infused, curriculum based art education to 700 students in Norwalk and Stamford public schools. Our School of Art students drive through Norwalk and New Canaan. We assume they stop for shopping at local stores. The lunch market across the street is a viable entity employing 4 FTEs because of SGAC traffic. From our student surveys, more than \$300,000 of art supplies is purchased each year (most from a Norwalk art supply store).

The economic ripple effect of SGAC is significant. We employ teaching professional artists on a contract basis. Our teaching fees help support 75 artists and their families. Our hardest decision is to balance artistic merit with financial sustainability. Artistic expression as a form of debate is likely to move elsewhere without State funding. Our galleries are known throughout the northeast and offer diverse and thoughtful exhibitions. Lectures improve the knowledge of art and serve to broaden and deepen public appreciation for the visual arts. Silvermine Guild Arts Center has been serving our community for 87 years. We have done so with excellence in exhibitions and teaching.

While small relative to our overall budget, State funding allows Silvermine Guild Arts Center to touch the lives of over 12,000 people. Our School of Art, outreach programs, and galleries are all part of a quality of life that is expected by Connecticut residents.  
Respectfully submitted,

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