

My name is Brian Dic Wheeler. I am Executive Director of the Middletown-based non-profit arts and sustainable living organization ARTFARM. I am also an independent performing and teaching artist who has been active in Connecticut since 1979, including over twenty years as Artistic Director of Oddfellows Playhouse Youth Theater.

I think it is essential to keep the CCT as an independent government agency, and shortsighted to fold it into Economic Development. Although it is well-documented that the arts generate business, create jobs and lead the way in economic development, this should be seen as an effect of their success rather than their reason for being. The arts are the document of the human condition and an important way for communities to engage in dialog and growth, both very important in challenging times. The arts raise our spirits, bring us together and give us strength, faith and vision. We need this now.

Eliminating the CCT will also put at risk substantial amounts of Federal Funding because a State needs to have an Arts Agency to receive National Endowment for the Arts funding. The arts are an important part of Connecticut's identity and appeal, and, though it may seem like an easy target in tough times, to eliminate the CCT would have an adverse effect on our economy and our quality of life. I recognize that you are faced with unbelievably difficult decisions at this moment, but preserving the CCT should be a choice that makes both short and long-term sense.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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