

Public Hearing February 17, 2009/ Appropriations Subcommittee: Conservation and Development Comments Presented by: Ryan Odinak, Executive Director, Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County and Board member, CT Arts Alliance

The Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County is a service organization supporting cultural organizations and artists throughout the region through coordinated marketing, professional development, collaborative initiatives and advocacy. There are over 200 nonprofit cultural organizations and hundreds of artists in the 15 towns of this region ranging from small chorales to major museums and art schools with deep roots to newly formed galleries. While they provide many unique programs they have many things in common.

First they all add to the quality of life in our state and to the vibrancy of communities. They do this with finely tuned budgets large and small and with passions that drive the sector to accomplish much more with limited resources than the for-profit sector might think possible or wise. They do this while operating out of back rooms, living rooms and in a few cases well appointed Board rooms. In addition, Americans for the Arts documents 2,841 arts-related business in Fairfield County employing 15,000 people. These workers comprise the Creative Economy and are the new natural resource of an ever changing world dependent on creativity to move industries of all kinds forward. These creative workers are attracted to regions rich with cultural offerings and buzzing with life. The kind of environments were it is evident that towns, cities and states value the arts and culture and partner with individuals, corporations and foundations to provide what it takes to make communities exciting places to live.

Nonprofits and artists also comprise a significant part of the creative workforce in the state. According to a recent National Endowment for the Arts study*, CT ranks 4th out of 50 states by percentage of artists in the labor force and 7th by number of artists per capita with a total of 29,861.

The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism's 2007 Economic Impact Study states that the arts employ over 27,000 people in Connecticut; the arts industry supports over 44,000 jobs statewide. The report also establishes the benefits of the Arts to the Economy, as they generate over \$3.8 billion in gross state product annually, including \$2.6 billion in personal income. State funding for the arts (grants to arts organizations and artists) is matched by private sector contributions at the rate of \$11 for every dollar spent by the state. The report documents that over 22 million people per year experience Connecticut's cultural attractions.

I would like to comment specifically to the Governors budget proposal and voice what I think is positive in it and what I have concerns about:

1-I am concerned that the move to merge the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism into the Department of Economic and Community Development will undo much that has been accomplished with the merger of tourism, film, history, and the arts since 2003. The goals of this combined commission were to work more efficiently, creatively, and productively. While I understand the need to streamline government in these difficult times, I fear that much that has been accomplished since the formation of the commission will be squandered. I am wondering if it would not be possible to leave the Commission whole and require them to make cuts internally to meet the needs of the state.

2-The governor's budget maintains the funding for Basic Cultural Resources Grant Grants to arts organizations in FY10. This is positive and I would encourage that this remain and that additional funding be added in FY11 to accommodate line-item arts organizations that are slated to lose funding. I would emphasize that these grants should remain dedicated to arts organizations.

3- While line-items are generally unpopular among arts organizations, unless you have one or a prayer of getting one, I think the cuts to the current line items at such a rapid pace, could destabilize the organizations that receive them. There needs to be a more gradual reduction plan with the funds recovered from Arts organization line-items going into the Basic Cultural Resources Grants Program making funding available for these arts organizations in FY11. Other line-items not eligible for this program, such as major attractions like Mystic, the Maritime Aquarium, CT Beardsley Zoo, and Stepping Stones Museum for Children should be considered separately and funding should be given to them through a designated grants program to support their role in tourism. **Thank you for your time and for the work you do on behalf of our State.**

Source Referenced: *Artists in the Workforce 1990-2005, National Endowment for the Arts.