

*Testimony of Tod Bryant, Norwalk Preservation Trust
Before the Appropriations Committee
On proposed changes to funding for vital services and Commissions
in the 2009 budget*

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to give testimony about the impact of the Governor's proposed budget and organizational changes to the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism.

As president of a local historic preservation nonprofit, I can say from personal experience that cutting the grant programs (as proposed in the Governor's budget) would be extremely detrimental to local efforts and unpopular at the local level. Many organizations rely on this money to fund activities which add to the local tax base, retain neighborhood character, create affordable housing, preserve open space and foster smart growth. The complete elimination of this funding would be so devastating that some organizations would have to cease operations and their value to the community would be lost. I understand that some reductions must be made, but I am asking you to support your constituents by continuing as much of this funding as possible.

The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, which serves as the incubator and guardian of many aspects of Connecticut's quality of life, is effective as a unified agency. I cannot stress enough that the CCCT's Historic Preservation and Museum Division and the State Historic Preservation Officer and his staff are indispensable to the implementation of national and state historic preservation policy at the local level. The staff of this agency consists of experienced professionals who are unmatched in their dedication to their work and the efficiency with which they carry it out. They make it possible for local organizations to fulfill their missions and the loss of SHPO staff would also be deeply felt, even resented, at the grassroots level.

I ask you to carefully consider the impact of the Governor's proposal on the cities and towns of your districts. I ask you to preserve as much funding for local organizations as possible and to keep the Commission for Culture and Tourism intact as an independent agency. I ask you to do this for your constituents.