



APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE TESTIMONY
February 17, 2009

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Thomas Carruthers, Executive Director of the Connecticut Film Festival.

Since it's inception in 2005, the Connecticut Film Festival has grown from a regional festival to the large production planned for June 2-7, 2009. What was once originally started as an event screening "pretty" films has evolved in scope into an economic development project incorporating education, workforce and job development, culture and tourism, commerce and a several year plan to attract film, music and digital media production and post production facilities to Danbury and the Housatonic Valley Region. More than 80 days and nights of film screenings and education have been produced during this period.

Jim Whitney and his staff at the Northwest Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau (NW CT CVB) have been onboard from the very beginning when he was approached with the project in November of 2004. Since that time, his services have been invaluable to marketing, the growth, the current success, and the strategic and tactical planning as well as the operational assistance he provides throughout the year.

Now, our model for growth is based on several very successful national and international events attracting upwards of 100-125 thousand people and having regional economic impacts of 70-110 million USD per event. We have customized these very successful models by incorporating the goals and objectives of the Connecticut Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC). This new model integrates job and workforce development and education into all of our events.

In June 2009, NW CT CVB will play a greater roll than ever before in the growth and expansion of the Danbury festival and conference. Jim Whitney and his staff will be in charge of our operations handling and ticketing and the coordination of more than 300 events in over 2 dozen facilities, which include more than 130 films, 100 educational workshops, panels and keynotes and more than 100 musical performances. Mr. Whitney has been instrumental in facilitating grants and financial sponsorships that have brought the festival to fruition. He has been part of several pitch teams, assisting us with strategies and tactics, and a wealth of knowledge we would be unable to afford and hence stiffen the success and growth of our event.

Through NW CT CVB's continued support, we intend to become a medium sized employer with paid professional staff in Danbury creating an event that attracts more than 100K visitors during 10 days each June and eventually having a multi-million dollar tourism impact on the Housatonic Valley Region.

Respectfully Yours,

Thomas Carruthers, Executive Director
Connecticut Film Festival
thomascarruthers@yahoo.com
203-247-4273