

The Arts Council

of Greater New Haven

70 Audubon St., 2
New Haven, CT 06
t 203.772.2788
f 203.772.2262
e info@newhavena
i www.newhavena

TESTIMONY FOR APPROPRIATIONS HEARING

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My name is Cynthia Clair. I am Executive Director of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven and President of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide arts advocacy group. The Governor's Rell's Deficit Mitigation plan released Nov 25th calls for a 35% cut to the CT Commission on Cultural and Tourism's (CCT) Basic Cultural Resource grants (source of operating support grants) and Culture, Tourism and Arts grants (challenge and marketing grants), 35% cut to line items and a 25% cut to the Tourism Districts (already consolidated from 5 to 3 districts).

We understand the State is facing a serious budget crisis and budget cuts are needed, but the arts have already been subject to significant cuts. The Commission on Culture and Tourism experienced a 45% cut to the grant budgets when the FY10 budget was approved in September, then was cut an additional 5% in the Governor's rescission. As a result, many arts organizations have already endured cuts of 60 to 70% in their FY10 operating grants from the CCT. These additional mid-year cuts would be devastating to the cultural community. Arts organizations are already struggling to maintain programs in light of these cuts from the state as well as reductions in funding from the hard hit corporate sector and individual patrons whose assets have been reduced in this economic downturn.

Why is state funding for the arts at this time important?

The arts mean jobs for our state.

170,000 Jobs/10% of the Connecticut Labor Force come from culture and tourism. Add to that the impact of the arts in attracting businesses and aiding businesses in employee recruitment, and it becomes obvious that the arts mean jobs for Connecticut.

The arts contribute to Connecticut's economy.

\$14 Billion in Connecticut economic activity from culture & tourism activities annually
The arts generate over \$3.8 billion in gross state product annually, including \$2.6 billion in personal income.

The arts mean enjoyment and education for all of our State's citizens.

This year, operating support grants funded organizations in 49 communities from Pomfret to Torrington to Bridgeport and New London. Grantees are evaluated in a panel process not only on their management and artistic quality, but also on their effectiveness in partnering with community organizations and their programs serving Connecticut's most

underserved and at-risk citizens. Contrary to some misperceptions, those who benefit from the arts are not only the privileged who can afford to pay their own way. Arts organizations throughout this state provide programs for children, for senior citizens, for those with mental and physical disabilities, bringing opportunities for learning and self-expression. In my community of New Haven, I know of current arts projects addressing homelessness, teenage eating disorders, and racism. The arts are not frills. They are powerful and necessary.

The arts mean quality of life for our citizens.

Across Connecticut, significant community life and involvement are built around the arts. They provide a positive place where community leaders, families, and citizens of all ages and races can meet, be engaged, and celebrate humanity. Not only are the arts important for our economic well-being, but they are also vitally important for our social and emotional well-being.

State support for the arts provides leverage for all other sources of arts support. On average, state support of arts organizations ranges from 2% to 10% of organizational budgets. Commission on Culture and Tourism arts grants, with rare exceptions, require recipients to match one dollar for every state dollar provided, and generally stimulate many times more. The private sector further invests in local projects supported by the Commission. Foundations, corporations and individuals look to CCT grantees as an indicator of excellence in quality, management and effectiveness. In addition, federal dollars are committed only when State funding exists. Without State funds, leverage for arts organizations all but ceases.

Few of us want to live in a State where quality of life is mediocre. A healthy arts community is critical to the vitality of our cities and towns. Families and executives looking to relocate to a new place not only look for good schools, they seek a vibrant climate with ample and varied opportunities for entertainment and lifelong learning. Funding for the Commission on Culture and Tourism is a small investment of our State government, which comes back to our citizens exponentially in our quality of life in Connecticut. We support a state which is fiscally responsible and prudent as well as one which values its people's creative spirit and artistic expression. We urge the Legislature to maintain current funding for the Connecticut Commission for Culture and Tourism. It is money very well invested.