

Testimony of Mayor John M. Picard
City of West Haven

Proposed Bill No. 5918
AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR RESTORATION OF THE
CULTURAL ARTS CENTER ON CENTER STREET IN WEST HAVEN

Chairman LeBeau, Chairman Berger, and members of the Commerce Committee. Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

I am in support of Proposed Bill No. 6173 which will authorize \$1.2 million in bond funding for renovations at the West Haven Cultural Arts Center. The bond funds are essential to fund renovations for our newly acquired Arts Center in our central business district.

The historic building dates back to the 1900s and was used by the Masons of Annawon Lodge 115 as a general meeting place and for special events. The building is remembered fondly by countless residents of West Haven as a gathering place for many civic and city-wide functions.

The City is embarking on a comprehensive plan to revitalize its downtown, including a \$4 million streetscape improvement project and a façade program. The City is currently utilizing the Connecticut Main Street program and its many seminars to assist in improving our downtown.

In the Spring 2012, the State will be in attendance at the ribbon cutting ceremony for our new \$100 million train station. The station is a half mile from our downtown and will attract hundreds of commuters to West Haven on a daily basis. We are working diligently with State officials to link our station to our downtown through such avenues as a streetscaping project which will install new sidewalks and lighting to make a walkable connection to our downtown and our new arts center.

The funding to redevelop this important building in the center of downtown is key to our efforts to move forward on our aggressive and ambitious plan to bring new life to our downtown. The new arts center will be home to many artistic endeavors including children's educational programs, plays, lecture series, local artist displays, rehearsal space for adults and senior civic chorus and orchestra, and will house a summer youth theater program. The center will be a dynamic environment and constantly display new art and artists on a rotating basis. The arts center will be an economic draw which will bring people back to our downtown and assist to redevelop areas businesses.

I hope you will consider a favorable vote for Proposed Bill No. 6173. Thank you for your time and attention.