



**To: The Honorable Mary Ann Handley, Senate Chair
The Honorable Roberta Willis, House Chair
The Honorable Anthony Musto, Senate Vice Chair
The Honorable Juan Candelaria, House Vice Chair
The Honorable Dan Debicella, Senate Ranking Member
The Honorable Pamela Sawyer, House Ranking Member
Members of the Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee**

**From: Gail Coppage, State Director of Workforce Development
Connecticut Community Colleges**

**Re: Public Hearing Testimony re
H.B. 5028, An Act Concerning Developing the Creative Economy**

Date: February 25, 2010

A 2001 position paper from the National Governor's Association suggests that the [creative] arts can be a "potent force in economic development" Arts programs have served as components of high-impact economic development programs throughout the nation. Harnessing the power of the arts and culture as tools can unite communities, create economic opportunity, and improve the quality of life by:

- Leveraging human capital and cultural resources to generate economic vitality in under-performing regions through tourism, crafts, and cultural attractions;
- Restoring and revitalizing communities by serving as a centerpiece for downtown redevelopment and cultural renewal;
- Creating vibrant public spaces integrated with natural amenities, resulting in improved urban quality of life, expanded business and tax revenue base, and positive regional and community image; and
- Contributing to a region's "innovation habitat" by simultaneously improving regional quality of life -- making communities more attractive to highly desirable, knowledge-based employees -- and permitting new forms of knowledge-intensive production to flourish.

A second position paper from the NGA in 2002 indicates that the arts can provide effective learning opportunities to the general student population, yielding increased academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better skill-building. An even more compelling advantage is the striking success of arts-based educational programs among disadvantaged populations, especially at-risk youth who benefit from increased self-esteem, the acquisition of job skills; and the development of much needed creative thinking, problem solving and communications skills. Involvement in the arts is one avenue by which at-risk youth can acquire the various competencies necessary to become economically self-sufficient over the long term, rather than becoming a financial strain on their states and communities.

All twelve of Connecticut's Community Colleges offer educational opportunities in the arts ranging from degrees in theater, dance, and music to the visual arts including photography, graphic design, multimedia communications and film. In addition, Quinebaug Valley Community College in

Danielson offers an Associate degree program for Arts Entrepreneurs to provide skills in marketing, finance, and the business side of running an arts-related business as do several of our colleges who offer entrepreneurial programs, run in cooperation with the Small Business Administration, to provide a background for students interested in starting a creative arts business. Middlesex Community College and Norwalk Community College were active participants in the 2008 film industry initiative sponsored by the State's Office for Workforce Competitiveness to create a workforce with experience and training in film production to attract investment by the film industry in Connecticut.

A wide range of arts and business programs and experience in educating the skilled workforce for which the State is known has prepared the community colleges to advance the development and expansion of the creative economy in Connecticut. The Connecticut Community Colleges offer support for the recommendations of Proposed Substitute Bill 5028 to: "study the creative economy ... brand this state as a leader in the creative economy, ... and attract economic activity to this state."