



**Greater New Britain
Arts Alliance**
Linking People and the Arts

March 11, 2010

To: Appropriations Committee Connecticut General Assembly

Re: Testimony regarding Governor Rell's March 1, 2010, Deficit Mitigation Plan

By: Stephen F. Hard, Executive Director, Greater New Britain Arts Alliance

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Stephen Hard. I am the Executive Director of the Greater New Britain Arts Alliance.

I appreciate the difficult position in which Governor Rell, the members of the Appropriations Committee, and the entire General Assembly find themselves. I am not asking our leaders to spare the arts and culture sector from the consequences of the current economic downturn. The key point is that the arts, culture, and tourism interests have already been targeted for cuts that have exceeded what has been required of other sectors of the State budget.

The Commission on Culture and Tourism, for instance, already took a 38% cut this fiscal year. What is being proposed is to cut yet another 35%. The line items for the arts were already reduced by over 25% and it is now being proposed that they be cut by another 25%. What makes this particularly onerous is that these cuts are being proposed on funds that have already been contracted and just months before the end of organizations' fiscal year. This proposal also follows on a very difficult time for the arts when virtually every other revenue source has also been reduced.

The fiscal benefits of the arts to our State are well known but bear repeating. The arts generate \$3.8 billion of economic activity each year, including \$2.6 billion in personal income. For every dollar given to arts and cultural organizations, the private sector contributes \$11. The State's money is seed money that yields a bountiful harvest.

More than anything else I want you and all our legislators to know who cuts to the arts affects most significantly. It affects the volunteers at Hole in the Wall Theater who took a risk to locate their new theater in downtown New Britain so that they could be part of our City's revitalization efforts. It affects the 60 member volunteer Plainville Wind Ensemble who perform concerts for free and collect donations for area charities. It affects the Art League of New Britain where an all volunteer organization struggles not only to be a place for the arts but to maintain their home in an important historic New Britain building. It affects the New Britain Youth Museum where with a skeleton staff they provide experiences for our young people that they can't get in a textbook.

The reason the arts are so successful in doing more with less is because so many people are so passionate them. That the arts and culture would be especially targeted for cuts at this time is disheartening in the extreme. During the Great Depression our government put artists to work and made a point to support the arts as an aid to recovery. It is absolutely in the best interests of the State of Connecticut to do what it can to foster the passion the arts engender in light of the benefits to Connecticut and all its citizens that accrue by virtue of our dynamic cultural environment. Please do not authorize further cuts to arts and culture in our State. Thank you.