

March 10, 2010

I'm unable to speak in person this evening, as a previous commitment has me out of state. Please accept my written testimony regarding Governor Rell's FY 2010 Mitigation plan.

I'm asking you to not reduce the Commission on Culture & Tourism Arts and Basic Cultural Resource Grants.

As the Managing Director of Oddfellows Playhouse in Middletown, I can speak best to how this affects our organization and community—our artists, our children and our community.

- Oddfellows Playhouse already received a 70% reduction in our FY10 CCT General Operating Support Grant. Further reductions to the budget set a dangerous precedent for the FY11 funding levels.
 - State funding exists to provide stability to arts organizations. Further reducing funding only contributes to the instability, and sometimes disappearance of those organizations.
 - The number of children who need affordable after-school programming is increasing.
1. Oddfellows Playhouse already weathered a near 70% reduction to our General Operating Support grant from the CCT this year. The further reduction or elimination of our CCT grant in FY11 would, in itself be nearly a 20% reduction in our revenue. Reducing the budget this year only sets the stage for further reduction next year. It is critical to avoid further reductions and instability. When you combine this with other losses, it greatly hinders our capacity to make the lives of our children and citizens any brighter.
 2. Oddfellows' management and board have been extremely prudent and responsible in our planning, but we can only weather so much. Arts organizations are being impacted in their earned revenues and donations. Private foundation funding is going to be much more difficult and competitive in 2010-11. State CCT funding exists to provide stability to arts organizations. Please maintain the state's funding of the CCT in FY 10-11 at the same level as FY09-10.
 3. Oddfellows Playhouse employs over 50 state residents over the course of the year, providing theatrical and arts programming to children in over 21 towns throughout central Connecticut. Oddfellows Playhouse and our artists spend our money at local businesses. Our audience and our staff frequent restaurants and businesses in Middletown on a regular basis. Reduction of our CCT funding means we will have to reduce services, reduce employment and reduce spending – this has economic impact directly on our local businesses and residents.

4. Arts events bring together young and old, rich and poor, to share in a profoundly human experience. Whether it is the 1,500 citizens attending our Children's Circus, or the over 1,700 children taking part in our programs, State Arts Funding allows residents to gather as a community. Oddfellows Playhouse Youth Theater brings together children ages 2-20 from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, 39% of them on scholarship aid. CCT General Operating Support makes this possible. Without it, where will these children go?

In times like these we begin to believe the arts are an extra. The arts are not an extra. Arts organizations such as Oddfellows Playhouse provide employment, participate in the community, provide safe alternatives and instruction for youth – keeping them off the streets and out of trouble. The funding from the Commission on Culture & Tourism helps Oddfellows Playhouse affect the lives of over 1,700 children per year. **Please do not reduce the Basic Arts and Culture Grants for the Commission on Culture & Tourism.**

Respectfully submitted,

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