

To: The Government Administration and Elections Committee
From: Amy Wynn, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
Date: February 24, 2011
Re: Testimony on the Commission on Culture & Tourism and the State Budget

Mr. Co-Chairmen and members of the committee,

My name is Amy Wynn and I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, serving 24 towns, and I am also on the board of the Connecticut Arts Alliance. I submit this testimony in support of Connecticut's Art in Public Spaces program. Since its inception in 1978, over 300 works have been commissioned. The works represent a wide variety of media, including sculpture, wall relief, environmental installation, painting, and photography; and range in scale from works on paper to monumental murals.

The purpose of the Art in Public Spaces program is to provide the citizens of Connecticut with an improved public environment by investing in creative works of high quality for public buildings. The program adds visibility to and pride in the cultural heritage of the state and its people. **To date, the Connecticut program has resulted in 318 projects created by 199 artists in 61 towns.**

The Art in Public Spaces program has employed 90 Connecticut artists, many of them world renowned. In addition to employing artists, the commissioned artist frequently contract additional employees hiring fabricators, studio assistants, structural engineers, electricians, architects, installers etc. Artists who receive commissions purchase project materials from Connecticut businesses. They buy paint, granite, glass, stone, steel, light fixtures and more.

But this program is more than just an economic factor. It has to do with our identity as a state and as citizens of this state. These works greet and tell visitors that they have arrived in a place of ingenuity and free expression, a place full of wonderful things to explore, a place where innovation is welcomed. These works remind us that our home state and our citizens have limitless creativity in finding new ways of doing things and new solutions.

If you think that this program is a luxury that we can afford to cut, then imagine a barren airport, park, school campus, court houses, visitor centers, or government building or plaza. No expression of Connecticut's pride, its unique identity, its creativity will be present. We loose so much to visitors, to potential business and residential transplants, and to ourselves when we don't invest in public art and for all it stands for.

Please do not cut this very small fund that has a very meaningful and long-lasting impact.