

To: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
From: Mary Close Oppenheimer
Date: February 10, 2011
Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 6050, An Act Concerning the Development of the Creative Economy

I would like to support Bill #6050. I believe that arts and culture and the creative community are critical components of northwest Connecticut's economy and quality of life.

I am the Vice Chair of The Northwest Connecticut Arts Council. We began exploring what would be involved in doing an economic impact study just before the economy's collapse in 2007. Because our part of the state is quite rural, we knew that many (most) of the people involved in the creative community were not being counted by other studies. Therefore their economic activity and contribution to the State's economy was also being missed. Very few organizations have Dunn and Bradstreet numbers, which are critical to being counted. Individual artists are also off the radar in spite of being a large number of residents in many communities. The cultural activities we have in our area attract many second home owners and tourists driving employment in construction, landscaping, hospitality, housekeeping and food services, etc. Of course they are also critical to the quality of life for full time residents and attract more and more people to our State.

We approached COG members about helping us to fund a study. Many of them recognized the critical role culture plays in their communities and agreed to make a financial contribution to help us. Then the economy collapsed... At this time we do not have the resources to do a comprehensive economic impact study of the creative community. Instead, it would be far better and more cost effective for the State to do this for the entire State. As manufacturing jobs have disappeared, it seems that the creative economy is one of the few potential bright spots on the horizon. The information gained from Bill #6050 will be essential to determining how to improve the economic health of our State.

Please support Bill #6050.

Sincerely,
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