

Testimony before Appropriations Committee, March 2, 2011

My name is Liz Morten. I serve on the board of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, and I'm Advocacy Chair of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County. For about a decade I was board president and chair of the Westport Country Playhouse.

I'm here today to remind us all about why arts and culture are critical to this state.

We know the statistics. We know that arts and culture generate over \$3.8 billion in gross state product annually, including \$2.6 billion in personal income, and that Arts equal Jobs: Connecticut is home to over 10,000 arts-related businesses that support over 44,000 jobs. Beyond that, it's impossible to count the number that the arts indirectly support, in the dining, lodging and transportation industries, for example, that serve audiences, volunteers and employees.

I think we need to be reminded what that means in the real world. So I asked Lenny Ionesco, the owner of Ferrante Restaurant in Stamford about the impact Stamford Symphony has on his business. "On performance days," he told me, "the restaurant is full and I have to hire 3 or 4 extra people. Multiply that by the number of restaurants in the area," he said. "Multiply that by the number of parking garages, of security personnel. It has a big impact. There's more income for the town."

Support for arts and culture is a good investment: State funding is matched by private sector contributions at the rate of \$11 for every \$1 dollar invested. When we started our Westport Country Playhouse renovation project, the State invested \$5 million, which we promised to match 6 times. We did, but the total impact in terms of revenues to the surrounding areas was much larger. Artists and not-for-profit volunteers pour hours of free labor into their work. There's no question that Westport and the surrounding area are viewed as desirable places to live, because of a thriving cultural environment.

Arts and culture provide opportunities for education.

During the run of the production of The Diary of Anne

Frank the Westport Country Playhouse partnered with 16 not-for-profit and civic organizations including Neighborhood Studios in Bridgeport. Artist and teacher Steffi Friedman gave each of her Black and Hispanic students a copy of the Diary to read. Many of Friedman's students had little prior knowledge of the story, so she provided them with her own account of living in Germany during Kristallnacht. One of Friedman's teenaged students said, "This was a life changing experience. I came to learn and I ended up inspired."

Arts and culture make our state a vibrant place to live.

Some of the most talented people in the world choose to live and work here. Joanne Woodward told me that she and her husband Paul Newman moved here because they wanted to raise their children in an environment that supported the arts.

We have a vibrant, creative economy here in Connecticut. It *is* a tourist destination, and Governor Malloy's plan to invest \$15 million to market it is a good one. But we need to ensure we always have something to market.

I spoke with actor/director James Naughton, who warned me that if we don't support arts and arts education and nurture the artists of tomorrow, our wonderful communities won't be the same and our children and our grandchildren will pay the price.

During the Second World War, Winston Churchill's finance minister said Britain should cut arts funding to support the war effort. Churchill's response was, "Then what are we fighting for?"

So brand CT, market CT, celebrate CT—but know what it is you're selling. This is one of the most creative places on earth, and that creativity provides jobs, and a quality of life beyond anything most people can imagine. It's why people choose to live, work and spend their tax dollars here.