

To: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
From: Steven Dahlberg, Director, International Centre for Creativity and Imagination
Re: In support of H.B. No. 6050, "An Act Concerning Developing the Creative Economy"
Date: February 10, 2011

This letter is in support of the H.B. 6050, regarding the development of the creative economy in the State of Connecticut. I have worked in the creativity field for nearly 20 years, promoting the development and application of imagination, creativity and innovation in education, business, nonprofits, arts, government and communities. Through my work, I help people apply creativity to improve the well-being of individuals, organizations and communities. I fully support this bill, which helps the state bring deliberate attention to creativity, better understand the creative economy, and create the conditions for creativity to thrive across sectors.

As a member of the National Creativity Network board of directors, I also support this bill as it would add Connecticut to the ranks of a handful of other states that are promoting creativity statewide in the economy, education, workforce, jobs, arts and culture. Focusing on the creative economy across higher education and the workforce in Connecticut will make us more competitive in creating businesses and jobs, while creating a place that more people want to live, work and play. Other state creativity initiatives include:

- Creative Oklahoma's "State of Creativity"
- Massachusetts' "Creative Challenge Index"
- The Wisconsin Task Force on Arts and Creativity in Education (a 36-member task force from education, commerce and culture)
- Minnesota's 4Front (designed to support imagination, creativity and innovation across the four sectors of food, health, the arts and design)
- New Jersey's "Creativity, Innovation and Sustainability"
- Colorado Creative Industries
- Lincoln Center Institute's Imagination Conversations (a national initiative promoting imagination, creativity and innovation in all 50 states; and America's Imagination Summit in July)

This bill has the potential to both recognize and expand two significant aspects of the creative economy – the economic impact and enjoyment of the arts and culture sector, and the intentional development of creative thinking abilities in ALL workers in the state. It is important and laudable that the arts employ nearly 30,000 workers in the state. At the same time, if we ignore the creative potential of the other 1.8 million employees, we will never meet the challenge of inventing new innovations, building creative communities, creating new jobs, and attracting and retaining an engaged, creative workforce. This bill puts Connecticut on notice that creativity is a core driver of not only the economy but of our overall quality of life. It will help us renew the historical creativity that Connecticut has expressed in the founding of this country's democracy, in the inventions of people like Eli Whitney, in the literature and public insight of people like Mark Twain, and in the formation of imagination giants like GE.

It is important to recognize that creativity not only significantly impacts the economy, but is integral to every aspect of society. This legislation can serve as an impetus to promoting creativity up, down and across ALL sectors. Creativity is required for every person to be able to translate the ideas of his or her imagination into innovative products, services and organizations. Failing to harness the ideas and creative thinking of all workers in Connecticut leaves a vast untapped component of the creative economy.

I have been working to formally launch a statewide creativity initiative, called Connecticut Creates, since 2009. Activities to date have included several public dialogues in partnership with the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in 2009 and as part of the Lincoln Center Institute's Imagination Conversations

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in 2010 (one of which was broadcast on WNPR). I shared these initiatives in November during a summit at the Creativity World Forum in Oklahoma.

Several goals for Connecticut Creates emerged from the 2009 conversations:

- Economic and Community Development ... sustaining the economy through innovation and jobs, creating richness of community, and honoring the state's history of innovation.
- Advocacy ... modeling creative thinking, raising the awareness about the role of creativity, and innovation in future prosperity.
- Connecting Creative Communities across Sectors ... creating a community of creative problem solvers, promoting the role of arts in revitalization, linking shared creative community goals across sectors, and expanding opportunities for creativity and creative partnerships.
- Better Quality of Life ... engaging people in meaningful activity and creating active experiences that connect people to the creative process.

Participants stated that creativity is found in communities where there is vision, planning, hope, the ability to change and the willingness to risk. They sought to recognize that "Connecticut is a 21st Century State" that is prepared for a new world and is willing to build a systemic initiative that creates change through a sense of urgency. The creative economy bill will help formalize several of these goals and ideas at the statewide level and will help create new policies and support for creativity across sectors

Creativity is a mindset of thinking in new ways. Creative thinking includes a set of skills and abilities that can be nurtured in people, which they can learn to tap into and apply. As a professor of "Creativity + Social Change" at the University of Connecticut, I see adult undergraduates every semester awaken to their inherent creativity and discover that they are, indeed, creative. They realize that they don't have to be an artist to be creative and that they can express their creativity in many different ways in their lives, work and communities. Their words often convey better than mine the importance of creativity. Matt Delaney, a student of mine from West Hartford, wrote about his experience of learning to apply his creativity:

"I learned creativity is absolutely vital to the survival and progression of humankind. I am beginning to think that I am a creative person who has not practiced creativity in a LONG TIME ... until this class sparked it once again. I wonder if every UConn student took this class if the university would have an even larger, positive impact on the workforce in which its students are placed. I rediscovered my own creativity, passion and desire to help make this world a better place to be."

Creativity is what makes us profoundly human. We possess the urge to express this part of ourselves. Creativity engages people in purposeful activity – in learning, in work and in everyday community life. By developing and supporting the creative economy, we help create the conditions for creative things to happen, for creative communities to grow, and for creative people to connect. These are important activities for attracting and retaining both younger and older workers who want to live in a place where these things are happening. Successes of such places abound all around of us from the macro example of New York to the micro example of North Adams, Massachusetts.

By passing this bill to develop Connecticut's creative economy, we will recognize that existing creativity and arts are a vital part of the state's economy and quality of life, while encouraging the intentional development of creativity and innovation skills in children and adults to prepare them for contributing in meaningful ways to an economically and socially prosperous state.

As psychologist and leading creativity researcher E. Paul Torrance taught us, creativity can happen "by choice or by chance." Passing this bill and moving forward with concrete actions to develop and support the creative economy in Connecticut is a choice we can make to say that creativity matters – for everyone – and won't be left to chance.