



February 15, 2012

Appropriations Committee Testimony

The Governor's proposed budget for the DECD asks that you eliminate your funding of the Humanities Council along with legislative appropriations to at least 22 other cultural organizations. As I understand it, this recommendation was not made to save our state the resulting \$11.5 million. In fact, 90% of those funds are still in the DECD budget as part of a \$25 million "statewide marketing" line which will now be managed by DECD commissioners and staff.

Since our establishment by the National Endowment for the Humanities as an independent non-profit organization -- NEH does not permit its funding to flow to a state agency -- the legislature has seen fit to provide us with the state funding required to match our federal appropriation. We have used our state funds for two main purposes: The first is to build the capacity of heritage organizations, such as museums and historical societies, so that they can become more vital forces in their communities and stronger engines of heritage tourism. Secondly, we work in close partnership with schools and libraries across the state to provide both students and adults with professionally led reading programs.

Over nearly 40 years we have earned your trust as effective stewards of state funds. We have proved to you the impact of our work, the rigor and integrity of our process and the efficiency of our operation. You have recognized us a model of results-based accountability and we have received national awards from the NEH for the creativity and the quality of our efforts.

This year, our work aligns more precisely than ever with the state's agenda. The major emphasis on "place-making" as a base for economic development requires the very foundation of organizations and destinations that our grant programs have built and continue to strengthen. And our carefully targeted and evaluated reading programs for students and families are exactly what teachers tell us is needed to help close our education gap.

So why take our funds away now? I ask that you let us continue to do the work that you have made it possible for us to do. Our appropriation, which you have authorized year after year, is already working as you intended - for the people of Connecticut and for our economy.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Parnes', is written over the typed name.

Stuart Parnes

Executive Director