

**CT STATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING 2-15-12
RE: Department of Economic and Community Development**

Speaker: Ryan Odinak, Executive Director
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I am here this evening to comment on the Governor's proposed budget for the Department of Economic and Community Development, specifically arts and culture funding within DECD's budget.

Under the Governor's proposal, all the arts and cultural grant lines have been zeroed out and rolled into statewide marketing. I am concerned that this approach leaves arts funding in a vulnerable place. I would like to suggest that arts and culture funding be returned to segregated lines in the budget.

The Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County has have been involved in the process of bringing our communities into a dialogue with DECD about how arts and culture can play an important role in helping make CT's cities and towns attractive to the creative talent that will help strengthen the State's economy. DECD's Office of the Arts has defined a new direction for grant making which puts arts and culture into the state's economic development strategy to create vibrant communities that will attract businesses. To fulfill this strategy, arts and cultural organizations will need financial resources and these need to be clearly defined in the State budget.

To further make the case for segregated arts and culture funding within the DECD budget I would note that to qualify for National Endowment for the Arts funding, Connecticut must have dedicated funding for the arts, a designated arts agency and an independent arts commission.

Arts and culture events and institutions are the key attractions for visitors and those who make their home in CT. They help make communities great places to live. The state must continue to invest in these institutions. Without strong, healthy cultural institutions, there will be nothing to market.

Thank you.