

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

Testimony of Jeff Bishop Executive Director of the Discovery Museum Board

February 15, 2012

My name is Jeff Bishop and I am the Executive Director for the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut. We are extremely grateful to the State of Connecticut for the generous support that it has provided to the Museum. For over 50 years, the Museum has provided a valuable service to the community which becomes especially important in these economically challenged times. The targeted grants from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism has served as a lifeline for our organization allowing us to provide a platform for the math and sciences to more than 75,000 annual museum visitors and a science based educational service to over 40,000 K – 8 students. With the recent completion of the 500 student Inter-district Discovery Science Magnet School adjacent to the Museum, we have the added opportunity and responsibilities to work in a unique national education model for which we have no additional funding.

The Discovery Museum Plays a Crucial Role in a Bringing Math and Science to the Community

In the past year, the Discovery Museum has continued in its mission to educate our State's children in science and math. Our Museum educators have served 543 school groups on-site and 400 groups off-site reaching nearly 40,000 children from 50 Connecticut cities and towns. We deliver almost 3,500 hours in Bridgeport public and parochial classrooms teaching hands-on, minds-on science with curriculum that meet State Department of Education standards. Discovery's programs are especially valued by schools since they cover specific science topics now included on the Connecticut Mastery

Test. In addition we are home to the NASA Challenger Center, one of only 52 centers world-wide that provides group learning in a simulator Mars mission setting.

In addition to offering educational programs, the Museum hosted a variety of events including :

- The 2nd annual Connecticut High School Regional Rube Goldberg Build a Machine Competition, in which the winners go on to the National Competition in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- The 110th Anniversary of Gustav Whitehead's first flight here in Connecticut. Gustav Whitehead flew two years before the Wright Brothers and we celebrated "Connecticut First in Flight" with a live joint tele-conferencing event with the Gustav Whitehead Museum in Leutershausen, Germany. We also honored Igor Sikorski, as well as the Frisbee.
- Lectures and book signings by inspirational figures such as Matthew Bagdonas, who is an Assistant District Attorney in Manhattan (since 1988), author, and a colonel in the United States Marine Corp. reserves. His book "Thieves of Bagdad" is his first-hand account of his journey to recover Iraq's lost treasures. His royalties from the sale of the book go to the Iraq Museum.

The Discovery Museum Receives Minimal Government Support

By national standards, The Discovery Museum's current level of government support is below average; nationwide science and technology centers receive 24.4% of their funding from the public. Discovery's public support currently stands at below 21%. Because The Discovery Museum receives no such support from Bridgeport, we have relied on an annual operating grant through the Commission on Culture and Tourism to help make ends meet. This has now become especially important since we are hosting the Discovery Science Magnet School adjacent to our facility yet we receive no public funding. This will be especially challenging for our institution given the attention that will result from this unique model of a science inter-district magnet school adjacent to a science museum. Together with Sacred Heart University and Bridgeport Board of Education, we are participating in the development of a

science method-based curriculum that will be used for teaching 500 students that will be a 70/30 mix from in and outside of Bridgeport.

The Discovery Museum Requests Your Continued Support

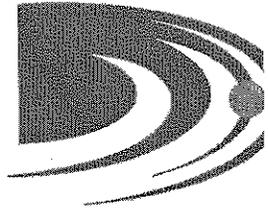
We ask for the State's continued support of our work in 2012 - 2013 at a level comparable to our current grant of \$378,000 which represents a 23% reduction from our starting 2009 number and for that level of support to continue through 2011-12. Of course, we understand these are extremely difficult economic times, and are grateful for any funding, however, losses in our endowment and deep reductions in private funding opportunities will make the proposed cuts problematic and would eliminate many of our programs and staff. The Discovery Museum's science and technology mission and the work we do with local school districts to support science literacy for all children is perfectly aligned with our state's direction and needs in these challenging economic times. Career opportunities of the future remain in clean energy, healthcare, information technology and education, where knowledge of science and technology is critical. Tackling our state's achievement gap becomes even more important as job markets tighten, making it harder for people with marginal skills to find meaningful employment. With enrichment programs that target what young people need to know and be able to do in science reaching tens of thousands of children each year, and with the construction of the Discovery Magnet School, a 500 student pre-K to 8 inter-district magnet school on museum grounds, the Discovery Museum is ready to do its part to bring about our region's future prosperity. We appreciate your support through these challenging economic times.

Attachments:

Discovery Museum Facts

DISCOVERY

MUSEUM AND PLANETARIUM



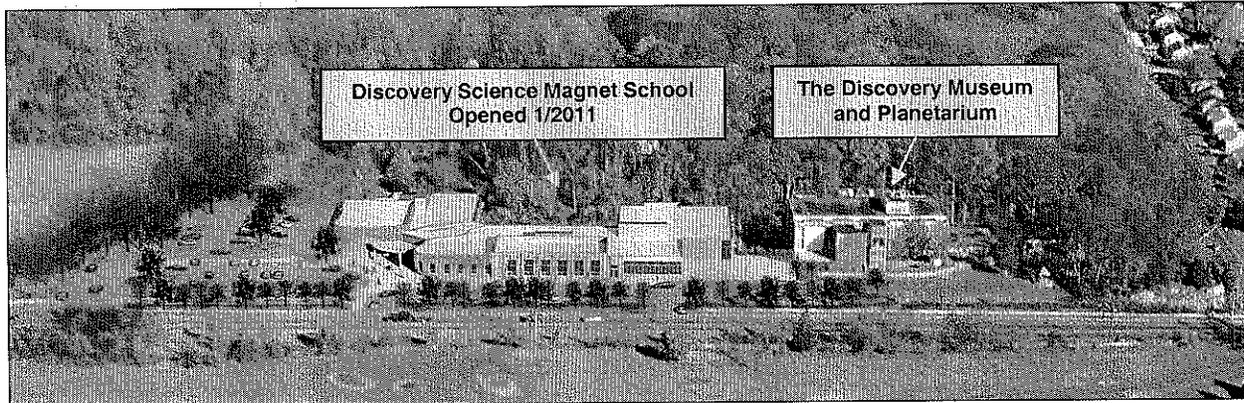
Science, mathematics, and technology skills have become the global languages of the 21st century. Science literacy **impacts the quality of CT's workforce and its economic viability.** At The Discovery Museum we take this challenge seriously.

The Discovery Museum, an Economic Driver and Regional Science Education Resource

- Cornerstone of Bridgeport's newly opened **Discovery Science Magnet School** (500, pre-K-8 students), located on Discovery's property, features an inquiry-based curriculum designed to address STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Federal mandates. Discovery staff sit on the curriculum advisory board, design programming, teach hands-on science, etc. In partnership with Sacred Heart University and the new school, represents a **one-of-a-kind, national model**;
- **Provides access to critical science education** for more than more than **45,000** regional school children and their **teachers** from 59 towns and cities throughout the tri-state area and beyond. From **after-school Lighthouse** programs to creating **bio-labs in Westport schools**, Discovery is a true **regional science education resource and saves** towns extraordinary staffing and equipment expenses;
- In addition to its 12 office staff, **employs more than 100 individuals** who go into classrooms to teach enriched science, to deliver after-school and summer programming. Discovery funds its own "scholarships" along with private donations so hundreds of underserved children can enjoy a resource denied them and one that a school board or town would need to fund on its own;
- **Prepares youth to be the next generation of scientists, engineers, and innovators.** Is developing **on-site facilities for job training in green, energy sustainability** sectors and plans to create classrooms and laboratories **to expose students to professional, vocational opportunities in science and technology and to improve critical thinking skills**;
- Bridgeport, the state's largest city, has little economic development. **Discovery, an important CT attraction for five decades, is one of only a few** attractions that **actually draw visitors from outside the city.** **Engages more than 65,000 visitors** per year with its hands-on exhibits, demonstrations, Henry B. duPont III planetarium, and Challenger Learning Center (only 48 in the world). **Draws thousands of attendees** to the area via its events.
- Orchestrated discussions with **German delegation** and **Bridgeport's economic development office** as part of Discovery's program to actively attract new business to Bridgeport and the state. Used Gustav Weisskopf's first-in-flight fame to attract the interest of Germany's delegation. Follow-up meetings now taking place. This experience a prototype for future exhibitions and events.
- Serves as **critical science education resource for teachers**, students, visitors in the region and beyond. School systems, e.g., Westport, Bridgeport, Fairfield, Norwalk, and others, save education dollars because of the on-site science enrichment Discovery delivers into their classrooms;
- Addresses **science illiteracy and the achievement gap** through its science and technology programs; Connecticut is 50 out of 50 states for two reporting years in a row (2010 connCAN report)
- Through CT's Peer Advisory grant, identified Discovery's **Henry B. duPont III Planetarium** and **Challenger Learning Center** as strategic assets. Only CT institution with these two significant attractions under one roof. Developed **long-term strategic plan** to position Discovery as a **science park drawing more than 100,000 people per year** by exploiting these assets.

discovery

MUSEUM AND PLANETARIUM



Discovery Science Magnet School Overview

Discovery Museum staff and trustees have been working with representatives of Bridgeport public schools, the City of Bridgeport, and its planning and community-based partners since 2004 to establish the *Discovery Science Magnet School*, a pre-K to 8 interdistrict public school with a science mission located on Discovery Museum grounds. This unique school combines the best hands-on learning techniques with the most effective standards-based educational strategies to create a learning environment that truly engages, excites, and educates young people while it prepares them for the economic and social challenges of the 21st century. Enrollment is open to students ages 3 to 13 from Bridgeport and the surrounding communities with a targeted mix of 70% urban and 30% suburban students. Once fully populated, this school will serve approximately 500 children.

Unique Educational Opportunity for Greater Bridgeport

The magnet school represents an important educational opportunity for greater Bridgeport. Not only does it provide a high-quality educational choice for city students, it will also give suburban students a chance to take part in specialized programs unavailable in their home districts. Because of its location within Veteran's Memorial Park, environmental stewardship will be an overarching theme of the school's facility and programs. In addition, the school's proximity to The Discovery Museum will open up countless opportunities for exciting collaborations between the Discovery Magnet School, The Discovery Museum and the larger community.

The Discovery Science Magnet School **planning partners** are: Bridgeport Public Schools and the school systems of Easton-Redding, Fairfield, Milford, Monroe, Shelton, Stratford and Trumbull. The Discovery Museum, Beardsley Park Zoo, and Sacred Heart University are community-based partners. General Electric Company is a key supporter.