



Testimony for Appropriations Subcommittee on Conservation and Development
February 15, 2012

Hello. My name is Diane Ploch. I am the Administrator of the Arts & Culture Collaborative for the Waterbury Region. We are a non-profit regional arts agency, serving artists, performers, arts and cultural organizations and their audiences in 13 towns. I am also on the board of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide organization for the arts.

I am here to oppose the Governor's budget proposal to roll all arts and culture funding into the broad category of Statewide Marketing. Arts and culture funding needs to be segregated. I believe the latest figure is \$10.5 million. Along with my arts colleagues, I advocate that we return to the previously approved budget breakdowns that include categories for arts grants and arts line items.

Since being moved into the Department of Economic and Community Development, the re-named Office of the Arts has defined a new direction. It is called placemaking and positions the arts at the heart of an economic development strategy to create vibrant communities that will attract new talent and businesses, revitalize our cities and towns and give our economy a boost. To make this strategy a reality, arts organizations need designated financial resources.

We, as arts advocates, have understood the economic impact of the arts for a long time and now applaud the State for recognizing the arts as an economic driver. According to a 2006 Economic Impact Study by Connecticut's Commission on Culture and Tourism, the arts generate over \$3.8 billion each year, including \$2.6 billion in personal income. According to Americans for the Arts, creative industries in our state employ over 27,000 people. For every dollar spent on the arts, \$21 goes back into the economy. That is economic impact that deserves its own budget category!

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Segregated arts funding is also critical in qualifying for federal dollars from the National Endowment for the Arts. States must have dedicated funding for the arts, a designated arts agency and an independent arts commission. Doesn't it make sense to leverage the state arts dollars we do have into additional federal support? Why would we put ourselves in jeopardy of losing that when the federal proposed budget is restoring money to the NEA?

As the Arts & Culture Collaborative, our mission is to strengthen and support the arts as a key component of furthering economic development and enhancing quality of life. Created under the Greater Waterbury Chamber of Commerce Foundation, we are connected to the business community – to the lifeblood of our economy. But we have our own budget, our own money and our own identity. As it should be on the state level!

We see the arts stimulating economic revitalization. The Palace Theater, located next to an arts magnet school and across the street from a UConn branch, draws people from the suburbs and surrounding states who then eat at area restaurants and buy highly taxed gasoline, driving money back into the economy and the state coffers. A couple blocks away are several arts organizations, great restaurants and market-rate housing. It's all in close proximity to the Mattatuck Museum and the downtown green, being re-designed in the spirit of placemaking. DECD is currently investing in a City Canvas program that will bring works of art with dramatic impact to a number of our larger cities.

Don't let the momentum be stalled! Please, Connecticut needs designated funds for the arts! Thank you for your time and consideration.

Diane J. Ploch, Administrator
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