

Senator Toni Harp and Representative Toni Walker, Co-Chairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and the Committee members about Connecticut's National Theater of the Deaf (NTD). I am Dr. Harvey Corson, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Theater of the Deaf.

Connecticut still is the site of the world's first deaf professional theater company established in 1967 and is the oldest continuously performing professional touring theater company in the nation. This company is the National Theatre of the Deaf. It is composed of deaf and hearing actors and actresses, playwrights, designers, and producers from its inception to the present.

The NTD is now in its 45th year of operation and has a commendable history of providing performances in its beautiful and unique theatrical style which links the visually expressive American Sign Language (ASL) with the spoken word that enables both the deaf and hearing audiences to "see and hear every word". Although over the years the company has performed in all 50 states and toured to all seven continents, the NTD and its Little Theater of the Deaf (LTD) have continued to perform in many cities, towns and schools in Connecticut.

In recent years, the NTD has collaborated with many theaters in Connecticut on appropriate, creative, and artistic approaches and adaptations to make their productions accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing citizens. Also, the NTD has made casting recommendations to those mainstream theaters asking for assistance.

Attached is a three-page summary of the 45 years of creative and innovative work of the historic Deaf theatre arts company founded in Connecticut.

The proposed draconic budget reduction of 100% of the line-item state appropriation for the NTD under the Department of Economic and Community Development in the Governor's Proposed Midterm State Budget Adjustments would seriously curtail the continued operation of the NTD, endangering its survival.

It is for these reasons that the NTD Board as well as the Connecticut Deaf Community ask you to seriously consider other possible alternative solutions to deal with this budget matter in order to enable Connecticut's National Theatre of the Deaf to survive as part of the vital and needed cultural diversity in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

Connecticut's National Theatre of the Deaf

Connecticut Roots

1. Founded in Connecticut 45 years ago, the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) has brought its touring theatre company to every city and most every town in Connecticut.
2. NTD/LTD sprang from an underserved population which evolved into serving all audiences where they "see and hear every word."
3. In its 45 year history, the NTD has maintained an unbroken symbiotic relationship of service and support.
4. Created as a touring theatre that serves all audiences but specializes on serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in schools as no other state funded theatre arts organization in Connecticut can and provide *role-modeling, personal inspiration and artistic adventure* through the unique NTD style of performance.
5. NTD produces theatre for everyone which is an aesthetic and communicative approach to theatre, creating a style of acting that is unique and has been acclaimed throughout the world.
6. American Sign Language is the fourth most used language in the U.S and is our artistic medium to illuminate original and world literature as well as social and cultural values to Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Hearing audiences.
7. We are gratefully, *Connecticut's National Theatre of the Deaf* and this can be underscored by the U.S. State Department's representative who recently brought a delegation from Argentina to have NTD help them form a theatre of the Deaf. He states, "...this unique troupe is nothing short of amazing and makes me proud to live in Connecticut..."

Contributions To The State Of Connecticut

1. Life changing motivation and inspiration for the tens of thousands of Connecticut residents who have experienced NTD live, film and video taped performances over the past 45 years and will hopefully continue with the State's commitment to on-going support.
2. Actor training begun in Waterford at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center in 1968 and continues today and having produced such creative Deaf and Hard of Hearing luminaries as: Tony Award-winning actress Phyllis Frelich, Oscar Award-winning actress Marlee Matlin, Emmy Award-winning producer Julianna Field, former NTD Executive Director and actor Aaron Kubey, and Broadway actor and playwright, Garrett Zuercher.
3. What NTD accomplishes with state funding is remarkable and shows that within the constraints of a limited budget, it maintains its core mission and performing for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing communities within the State while providing the services for which it is intended.
4. NTD represents the State of Connecticut as a center of arts education and the Deaf Theatre Arts to the rest of the country and the entire world. An example of the State's forethought and commitment to the diversity and acceptance of all people can be found in 2010 during the 375th anniversary of Connecticut's founding whereby NTD performed an original script called *Journeys of Identity*. These acclaimed performances took place in the Connecticut's Old State House's historic legislative chambers. The production, based on Connecticut archives, was an enactment of the creation of the first permanent school for the deaf in the United States, the American School for the Deaf, in 1817 and also the first state funding of special education in the U.S. in support of this school in 1818.

5. Connecticut's National Theatre of the Deaf has been asked twice by the US State Department to represent the United States/Connecticut. First, by bringing us to perform in Taiwan at the Deaflympics where people from all over the world attended. Secondly, by asking us to meet with delegates from Argentina as part of the State Department's International Visitors Program. In the list of groups they wanted to meet, we were the only group specifically named and in December 2011, they came to Connecticut to meet with us in hopes of creating an arts/theatre/education program in their own country. Additionally, last year a television film crew from the BBC came to Connecticut to film our performance as part of a new television series. This past summer we were included in a special arts film program as part of the Lincoln Center Festival in New York City.

Creation of a Unique American Art Form

1. Connecticut is the birthplace of the first truly American acting style as created by NTD in the mid-1960s that culminated into actors signing in American Sign Language (ASL) while at the same-time voicing the action and dialogue, "you see and hear every word." This style of acting has since been replicated and imbedded into numerous companies throughout the world who respectfully credit Connecticut's National Theatre of the Deaf as their mentor and creator of theatrical art form that meets the needs of *everyone* in attendance.
2. This new acting art form has provided a link for two heretofore different life-groups that have been historically isolated—Deaf and Hearing populations.
3. Prior to the inception of NTD and the new art form, there was a dearth of opportunities for the integration of Deaf actors, playwrights and designers into the mainstream. Today, there is an unbreakable bond between Deaf and Hearing artists and the audiences for which they perform in schools and public venues throughout the State of Connecticut as well as every state in the Union and all seven continents. **This performance record cannot be matched by any other touring theatre company and thus Connecticut's own National Theatre of the Deaf stand alone.**

NATIONAL THEATRE OF THE DEAF

SAMPLE LISTING

CONNECTICUT PERFORMANCES/WORKSHOPS/COLLABORATIONS

American School for the Deaf	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
Bristol Library	Hartford Children's Theater
Bushnell	Hartford Stage
Chester Meeting House	Ivoryton Playhouse
Connecticut College	Long Wharf
Connecticut's Old State House	Manchester Community College
Fairfield University	Mark Twain House

Public Testimony Before the Joint Appropriations Committee
Regarding Line - Item State Appropriation for the National Theatre of the Deaf
Wednesday, February 15, 2012

Middletown Community College

Middletown Library

Mohegan Community College

Morningside Productions

Mystic Seaport

New London Library

Norma Terrace Theatre

Northwestern Community College

O'Neill Theater Center

Sacred Heart University

Saint Joseph College

Sonalyt Studios

South Windsor Library

Stone House, Deep River

The Garde Arts Center

Thomaston Opera House

Trinity College

University of Connecticut, Storrs

Wadsworth Athenaeum

Wesleyan University

White Barn