

Budget Hearing
Commerce Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

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Testimony of
Matt Fleury, President & CEO
Connecticut Science Center, Inc.

Good morning Senator LeBeau and Representative Berger, and members of the committee.

My name is Matt Fleury, and I am president and CEO of the Connecticut Science Center, a statewide learning destination for schools and families. We are a two-and-a-half-year-old educational attraction in our capital city of Hartford, and by the end of this year we will have served one-million visitors in our short history, 20-percent of whom are school students on science field trips.

I appear before you in support of Senate Bill 1, Section 10, and Senate Bill 76, both bills involve the creation of a Connecticut Treasures initiative. At its core, the inclusion of Connecticut's cultural institutions and attractions in an economic development plan is highly strategic. These destinations are here to stay, they employ local taxpayers and they reward the State by leveraging investment by private donors and other sources that is 10-or-more times the level of the State's contribution to their operations.

Many of these institutions create the cultural experiences that attract talented people to fill jobs in Connecticut by making this a great place for their families. So-called "informal" learning centers such as the Science Center are involving thousands of Connecticut families in rewarding and motivating educational experiences this very day – and school is out! Just a few blocks away from us right now, children who visited the Connecticut Science Center on school field trips are acting as tour guides for parents and grandparents, enthusiastically sharing the joy of learning together as they had never before experienced it.

Within the CT Treasures concept lies a special innovation in public policy here in Connecticut – a specific relationship between Connecticut's cultural treasures and its public school system. Senator Williams' concept recognizes that Connecticut's finest destinations are now providing curriculum-focused educational experiences for school students and their families, and we are among the best providers of professional development for teachers.

At a time when our state is considering some of the most dramatic re-thinking of education policy in many years, it is extremely important to fully leverage all the best educational assets we have created. The CT Treasures concept has the potential to amplify that powerful connection, and to expand the contributions of many cultural institutions to learning in the classroom and throughout life.