February 21, 2013

Conservation and Development Committee
State of Connecticut
Office of Policy Management
450 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ARTS FUNDING

Conservation and Development Committee Members:

I write in both my current capacity as Board member of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council and as a former employee of The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts. For well over a decade, I have worked personally and professionally to advocate for the arts as effective tools for social change and powerful drivers of economic benefit for our State. In addition to their intrinsic value, the arts offer significant socio-economic benefits to Connecticut, including:

- **Job and Revenue Generation:** The arts create jobs and produce tax revenue. A strong arts sector is an economic asset that stimulates business activity, attracts tourism revenue, retains a high quality work force and stabilizes property values. The arts have been shown to be a successful and sustainable strategy for revitalizing rural areas, inner cities and populations struggling with poverty.

- **Enhancing Education:** The arts foster young imaginations and facilitate children's success in school. They provide the critical thinking, communications and innovation skills essential to a productive 21st-century work force.

- **Regional Placemaking:** The arts create a welcoming sense of place and a desirable quality of life. The arts also support a strong democracy, engaging citizens in civic discourse, dramatizing important issues and encouraging collective problem solving.

- **Preserving Connecticut's Legacy:** The arts preserve unique culture and heritage, passing a state's precious cultural character and traditions along to future generations.

As the Committee is aware, Connecticut's arts and heritage organizations are strategic policy assets and key prosperity generators for our State. In the 1980s and 1990s, Connecticut provided significant infrastructure capital to museums, heritage sites, theatres and performing arts centers statewide. In turn, these entities served as regional catalysts for business development; enhancing education and tourism, revitalizing blighted downtown areas, and fostering economic growth.

Increased, ongoing support for Connecticut's well established regional arts anchors like The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Harford, the Warner Theatre in Torrington, the

Palace Theatre in Waterbury, as well as our State's regional arts councils such as the Northwest Connecticut and Greater Hartford Arts Councils, is both critical and necessary to sustain the State's past significant investment in infrastructure.

In particular, many of Connecticut's not-for-profit cultural anchor organizations struggle with economic models that rely heavily on earned revenue from ticket sales, yet earned revenue alone will never cover the full cost of operating these facilities. This is why the continuation and expansion of State arts funding is so critical, particularly in today's challenging economic environment.

What the Committee may not realize is that contributed revenue from individuals, corporations, foundations and State and Federal sources comprise the balance of the revenue needed to operate these beloved institutions. Without significant ongoing philanthropic support from myriad sources including the State, many of Connecticut's finest cultural and heritage treasures simply would not exist.

To lessen arts funding at this time would be to negate both the State's prior significant investment in cultural infrastructure, as well as the impressive ongoing socio-economic impacts made by these entities and organizations in towns and regions across our State.

Respectfully submitted,

Vanessa

Vanessa Giannasi
Board Member, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council