Public Hearing February 20, 2013
Appropriations/ Subcommittee: Conservation and Development

Comments Presented by: Ryan Odinak, Executive Director, Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County and Board member, CT Arts Alliance

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Good Evening. I am Ryan Odinak, Executive Director of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County and a CT Arts Alliance Board member. I am here to speak in support of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County, the Alliance members we represent, and the arts and cultural organizations across the state that have benefited, or could benefit from State Arts Funding.

The Cultural Alliance is grateful for the State arts funding we receive each year. It has been an important part of our general operating support allowing us to provide services supporting cultural organizations and artists throughout our region through coordinated marketing, professional development, collaborative initiatives and advocacy. There are over 250 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in Fairfield County ranging from small chorales to major museums and art schools and hundreds of artists. They provide many diverse programs that broadly benefit the community and the Cultural Alliance supports them in unique ways that help them grow and operate more efficiently.

The Cultural Alliance builds programs, networks and information outlets that provide many professional development opportunities for our members. We have recently launched a job skills program for artists called "Make.Art.Work." and regularly host networks for our organization executive directors and marketing staff to present relevant topics and raise important issues to their work.

By providing coordinated marketing through FCBuzz.org, our regional website for arts and culture events, we help organizations and artists get the word out about what they are doing. By promoting this brand in print, on other websites and at live events, we help organizations connect to audiences eager to attend cultural happenings in the region. We also, bring Cultural Alliance members together to find cost effective ways to partner on promotions.

In 2013, only 26 organizations from Fairfield County were funded from Office of the Arts competitive grants due to limited funds. While they continue to do their work with finely tuned budgets large and small and with passions that drive the sector to accomplish much more with limited resources than the for-profit sector might think possible, this support is completely inadequate given the return that economic impact studies have demonstrated arts and culture return to the economy. According to the Americans for the Arts Economic Prosperity IV study, CT Arts and Culture organizations and their audiences generate over $653,000,000 in *Direct Economic* Activity and support over 18,000 jobs. In addition, they generate over $58,000,000 in revenue to local and state governments.

I understand that the State of CT is facing some challenging decisions in creating our State budget, however, these facts are a compelling argument for increasing funding for arts grants, minimally to the FY12 level, rather that supporting the cuts that the Governor's budget proposes. Arts and Culture have an important role to play in helping build our State's economy and attracting the creative workers that are drawn to regions rich with cultural offerings and buzzing with life. The kind of environments where it is evident that towns, cities and states value arts and culture and partner with individuals, corporations and foundations to provide what it takes to make communities exciting places to live.

Arts and Culture are a good investment of public dollars. They are economic drivers, they play a role in educating our youth and they help emphasize what is unique in our communities. I urge you to support additional funding for arts and culture in CT.

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