

HILL-STEAD MUSEUM

Testimony of: Debra K. Pasquale, Interim Executive Director

In support of: Proposed S.B. No. 530 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE CONSORTIUM OF CONNECTICUT ART MUSEUMS.

Commerce Committee -- February 14, 2013

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Committee. My name is Debra Pasquale, and as the Interim Executive Director of Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington, CT I'm here to respectfully request your support for Proposed S.B. No. 530 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE CONSORTIUM OF CONNECTICUT ART MUSEUMS.

I'm delighted to come before you in partnership with six other colleagues who together represent seven independent leading art museums in Connecticut. With this bill our proposed partnership seeks to build upon our already significant contribution to Connecticut's "creative" economy. As a collective we enhance the state's identity as a cultural hub and its attractiveness as a tourism destination.

On the chance that you've not visited, let me tell you a little about Hill-Stead so that you can understand why enhancing collaboration with our sister museums will add further economic value to our state.

A National Historic Landmark, Hill-Stead is a 1901 33,000-square-foot house filled with Impressionist masterpieces and antiques, all in their original domestic setting. Of the 36 residential rooms, 19 are intact and open for public tours. The Colonial Revival-style house rests on 152 hilltop acres in Farmington and includes miles of stone walls,

woodland trails, a pond, a former dairy farm complex and a circa 1920 sunken garden designed by landscape architect Beatrix Farrand.

Each year visitor attendance has grown – in the last five years to more than 48,000 in 2012, 10% of these being school children from 52 educational systems across Connecticut. In addition to adult and school age visits to the historic house, the property hosts two summer time events of national and statewide economic and creative significance.

This summer we'll begin our 21st season with the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival. Since its inception the festival has brought national talent and attention to our state and boosted the local economy with visitors. Last year nearly 5,000 people attended the festival. This attendance nearly doubled from the previous year. The 2013 Inaugural poet Richard Blanco read at the festival nine years ago and will return this July.

Our second summer long event, held each Sunday, is Hill-Stead's Farmers Market. In its fourth season in 2012, the market welcomed more than 13,000 visitors who enjoyed the Museum's grounds while having an opportunity to shop for Connecticut grown fruits, vegetables, protein and dairy from more than 20 different vendors each week.

The appropriated funds in SB 530 will be designated for *increased* operating expenditures on exhibitions, programs, and marketing some programs I've outlined above. Based upon the leveraged return of \$6 for every \$1 invested, the new funds promise to have an economic impact of at least nine million annually.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and I respectfully request you favorably considering SB 530.