



Testimony Senate Bill 530, An Act Concerning Funding for the Consortium of Connecticut Museums

Honorable Chairmen and Members of the Commerce Committee,

My name is Melanie Carr, and I am here today to testify in favor of Senate Bill 530, An Act Concerning Funding for the Consortium of Connecticut Museums.

I am the Director of Visitor Services at the New Britain Museum of American Art. We are very honored to be working in cooperation with the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Bruce Museum, Florence Griswold Museum, Hill-Stead Museum, Lyman Allyn Art Museum and Mattatuck Museum, so that we can continue to make a significant contribution to Connecticut's economy. Last year, the New Britain Museum attracted close to 100,000 visitors. We mounted 27 exhibitions, organized 1152 programs, 69 events, and toured 14,854 students from over 100 cities and towns in Connecticut. Working in conjunction with Professor Richard Benfield of Central Connecticut State University, we have calculated that the economic impact of the Museum's operations in Connecticut has resulted in generating \$5,761,000 in our state.

For a recent exhibition, we attracted visitors from 48 states and we are resolved in the future to market more effectively to the citizens of North Dakota and Nevada. Annually, we spend \$370,000 on marketing. It is vitally important that the Museum continues its aggressive advertising, so that in the future, even more visitors will come from near and far to Connecticut and patronize our area gas stations, restaurants, hotels and shops. Currently, the Museum has 20 fulltime and 14 part-time employees. It is our hope that in the future we will add individuals to our payroll, especially in the area



of education. In addition to the employees of the Museum, we also benefit from the commitment of over 450 volunteers who come on a regular basis from all over Connecticut to New Britain.

Each year, the Museum rotates throughout our galleries hundreds of works of art, many drawn from the 12,000 objects in the permanent collection. Our holdings are considered among the very best collections of American Art in our country. It is our hope that in future years, we have a substantially larger number of people journeying to New Britain to benefit from one of the most outstanding art experiences anywhere. *Connecticut Magazine* recently listed the Museum as the leading art museum of the state. As more and more individuals come to learn of our collections, programs and exhibitions and our staff, our impact will grow exponentially.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you today about this important issue. The New Britain Museum and our sister institutions are a major asset for Connecticut and we want to improve our operations so that we can dramatically strengthen our economy through cultural tourism and by enhancing the quality of life of our citizens. I urge you to support this bill, which will provide funds to help us achieve this objective.

Melanie Carr