

TESTIMONY OF ROBERT BURNS  
DIRECTOR OF THE MATTATUCK MUSEUM, WATERBURY CT  
BEFORE THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE  
OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Concerning SB 530  
An Act Concerning Funding for the Consortium of Connecticut Art Museums

Respectfully submitted February 14, 2013

Good morning Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, Ladies and Gentleman of the Commerce Committee. My name is Robert Burns and I am the director of the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury. I am testifying on behalf of a consortium of seven independent leading art museums in Connecticut – the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield; the Bruce Museum in Greenwich; the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme; the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington; the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London; and New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain.

Our seven museums offer some of the most exciting and stimulating exhibitions to be found anywhere. Our holdings consist of fine and decorative art treasures of incalculable value. Together we enhance the state's identity as a cultural hub, its attractiveness as a tourism destination, and the unparalleled quality of life found here. Yet potentially more significant is our impact for the State in creating jobs, attracting visitors and increasing revenue for the State.

A 2012 report from Americans for the Arts entitled *Arts & Economic Prosperity IV in the State of Connecticut* clearly exhibited that the arts and culture are a significant industry in the State of Connecticut—one that generates \$653 million in total economic activity and supports 18,314 full-time equivalent jobs. In utilizing their *Economic Prosperity Calculator* our consortium found that in FY11 that our seven museums had an impact \$25.5 million in economic activity and supported 718 full time equivalent jobs. And, for my local representatives I want to share that the Mattatuck Museum accounted for \$2.1 million or nearly 10% of that total and 58 FTE jobs.

Our group fully understands that these are difficult financial times for the State. Please know that these are likewise trying financial times for our museums. Given the steady, reliable impact of our seven art museums on the state economy, we are seeking an annual appropriation of one and a half million dollars (\$ 1.5 million) from the State of Connecticut to be shared equally by our seven member museums. We believe that by working together (instead of competing) for your support of this bill is not only an efficient but effective way for the State to make a relatively small investment that will bring a very good return. Such an appropriation will enable our institutions, both individually and collectively, to deepen the impact of what we do best – the

presentation of exhibitions and educational programs designed to attract the participation of residents and visitors to Connecticut.

We employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within our communities, and market and promote our regions. Our museums are host to thousands of visitors from the region drawing visitors from New England, New York and New Jersey and across the country. Our visitors stay in hotels, eat in restaurants and purchase goods in our malls and shops. And, “cultural tourists” spend an average of 65 percent more than other visitors.

We are very fortunate in Waterbury that our school board, mayor and other elected officials agree so strongly with our local educators that there is enormous value in bringing our children to the Mattatuck Museum. Each year, more than 7,000 children visit the museum for school tours and after-school programs. In fact, every 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade student in the Waterbury School system visits the Mattatuck Museum each year. Through the power of art, history and culture they can only experience in the museum setting, our staff is literally changing the lives of these children who come from extremely diverse economic and social backgrounds.

The proposed bill seeks to build upon our already significant contribution to Connecticut’s “creative” economy. Located strategically across our State, our seven institutions will be able to contribute even more to the cultural and economic vitality of our state through this partnership with the State of Connecticut that offers us operating stability. Appropriated funds will be designated for *increased* operating expenditures on exhibitions, programs and marketing.

In conclusion, I hope that my remarks have helped to show that by supporting this bill, you are investing in an industry that supports jobs and generates government revenue for the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important issue and on behalf of my colleagues, I would ask that you take positive action on this bill. I would be happy to entertain any questions you may have.