

cthumanities

Testimony: Appropriations Committee

February 24, 2014

Re: Connecticut Humanities Council

We are here this evening to offer our sincere thanks to you the members of this committee and to the entire General Assembly for the non-partisan support that you continue to show to the Connecticut Humanities Council.

Since you first approved an appropriation for the Council in 1996 “to provide grants and support services for local institutions in the humanities, including libraries, museums and historical and cultural societies and associations” our mission has remained unchanged. The work we do strengthens our communities, our state and our economy by helping Connecticut’s non-profit organizations engage and enrich the lives of both residents and visitors. As Connecticut’s office of the National Endowment for the Humanities, we leverage the funding that you provide with significant Federal, private and corporate investment.

The breadth and success of our work remains impressive: last year over 500,000 people participated in the programs that the Council supported in more than 100 towns and cities across Connecticut. We generated more than \$2,400,000 in matching funds. And yet the need continues to grow. As private and corporate funding for Connecticut’s non-profits remain severely depressed, your appropriation to us has become even more critical. In the past quarter alone, we have received grant requests for three times the amount of funding we are able to provide.

So when we say “thank you” for your continued confidence in us and for the generous funding you provide, we speak not only for our board and staff, and for the leadership of the State Library where our appropriation resides, but for the staff and visitors of over 100 organizations across the state from some of the largest - the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Mystic Seaport, the New Haven Free Public Library - to some of the smallest - Kent Historical Society, Noah Webster House, and the Eli Whitney Museum.

We also speak for the 25,000 users - teachers and students, residents and visitors who go each month to our website ConnecticutHistory.org, Connecticut’s most comprehensive online resource of more than 1000 stories of the state’s people, places, and history. And we speak for the 5,500 students in grades 6-12 across the state who will learn something unforgettable about themselves and each other this Spring as they participate in Connecticut History Day and compete at a national level for recognition and scholarships. And for the 6,700 Connecticut students and 162 teachers who will find their own voices next month by representing Connecticut in another national competition - Poetry Out Loud. And we say thank you for the parents in some of our most impoverished communities, and in some of our prisons, who are learning to read to their children for the first time through our Family Read initiative.

The work of the Connecticut Humanities Council, fueled by the funding you provide, is a national model and the envy of my colleagues around the country. I hope you will share the pride in what we are able to accomplish with and for the people of Connecticut. It is extraordinary.

Stuart Parnes, Executive Director
Russell Blair, Chairman

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Executive Director