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

RE: Proposed H.B. No. 132 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE CONSORTIUM OF CONNECTICUT ART MUSEUMS.

Respectfully submitted February 28, 2013

To the members of the Commerce Committee, my name is Robert Burns and I am director of the Mattatuck Museum. I submit the following comments on the above referenced bill.

I am writing 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 Connecticut in creating jobs, attracting visitors and increasing State revenue. A 2012 Americans for the Arts report entitled *Arts & Economic Prosperity IV in the State of Connecticut* clearly exhibited that the arts and culture are a significant industry in Connecticut—one that generates $653 million in total economic activity and supports 18,314 full-time equivalent jobs. In utilizing the AFTA *Economic Prosperity Calculator* our consortium has found that our seven museums have a combined impact of $25.5 million in economic activity and support 718 full time equivalent jobs. I have attached a spreadsheet to our testimony outlining our individual and collective impacts.

We fully understand that these are difficult financial times for the State. Please know that these are also trying financial times for our museums. Given the steady, reliable impact of our seven art museums on the state economy, we are seeking to have the budget bill amended to include an annual appropriation of one and a half million dollars ($ 1.5 million) to be shared equally by our seven member museums.

Irrespective of our differences in location, budget and visitation, we believe that by working together (instead of competing) is not only an efficient, but an effective way for the State to make a relatively small investment that will bring a very good return. The AFTA report clearly showed that there is a leveraged return of $6 for every $1 invested by the State. Therefore, the

investment requested by our consortium will have a collective economic impact of at least nine million dollars annually or each of us will be able to have an economic impact on our respective regions of over $1.2 million.

Our museums employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within our communities, and market and promote our regions. Every year we host to hundreds of thousands of 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 shops. And, the AFTA study shows that "cultural tourists" spend an average of 65 percent more than other visitors.

Our proposal seeks to build upon our already significant contribution to Connecticut's "creative" economy. Appropriated funds will be designated for *increased* operating expenditures on exhibitions, programs and marketing. 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. 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.

It is precisely because of the uncertainty of State funding streams that our group has banded together to seek this appropriation. What is unique about our action is that we have agreed to divide the funding equally between our seven institutions, focusing on unity to attain the flexibility and consistency of steady funding that will enable us to better plan exhibits and programs while strategically targeting our marketing efforts to maximize the use of these funds.

My colleagues and I ask that the budget bill be amended to reflect our proposal that 1.5 million dollars be appropriated to these seven museums to be shared equally by all while returning to the State an impact six times the investment. Thank you for the opportunity to address this request with you on this important issue.