

TESTIMONY OF SUSAN BALL
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE BRUCE MUSEUM, GREENWICH, CT
BEFORE THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Concerning SB 132
An Act Concerning Funding for the Consortium of Connecticut Art Museums

Respectfully submitted March 6, 2014

Chairman LeBeau, Chairman Perone, members of the committee, my name is Susan Ball and I am deputy director of the Bruce Museum, testifying on behalf of Peter Sutton, Executive Director. I would like to offer the following comments on Proposed S.B. No. 132 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE CONSORTIUM OF CONNECTICUT ART MUSEUMS.

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.

The Bruce Museum is a regional museum of art, natural history, and science based in Greenwich, Connecticut, serving a 50 mile radius. The Museum is easily accessible from the I-95 corridor, the Merritt Parkway, and Metro North. Each year a total of 80,000 to 100,000 men, women, and children from all 50 States and 26 foreign countries visit the Bruce to attend permanent and temporary exhibitions, school and family programs, multiple events, including two annual outdoor festivals, and the very popular museum shop, for a total economic impact for the region of over 7 million dollars.

The Bruce employs 46 people who make the work of the Museum possible, from curators, educators, exhibitions designers and installers, retail shop manager, guards, and administrators, as well as trained docents and other volunteers (total 450). Together they make it possible for the Bruce to serve a broad and diverse community. The Bruce's educators and docents conduct programs and tours for over 16,000 children in school programs, after school programs, off-site

outreach programs at schools, vacation and summer programs, and family events, tailoring school programs to the local curriculum and State standards. Volunteers clocked over 15,000 hours for the Museum. The Bruce's executive director, curatorial staff, and occasional visiting guest curators mount between twelve and fifteen temporary exhibitions each year, many with lavish catalogues; in addition the Museum has several permanent exhibitions. Funding for temporary exhibitions is frequently national in origin, bringing additional dollars into the State.

The Bruce Museum is the cultural capstone of the Town of Greenwich. The benefit to the greater Greenwich area included approximately \$1.9 million in spending on food, entertainment, transportation, retail purchases, and lodging. Yet, visitors come not only from nearby (55% from Fairfield County), but also New Haven, Litchfield, and Westchester Counties as well as a significant contingent also from New York City--both residents and tourists. For example, over 5,000 people flock from far and wide to the Bruce's two annual outdoor festivals, generating significant income for Connecticut artists, craftspeople, and food vendors.

A 2012 Americans for the Arts (AFTA) 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. The seven museums in our Consortium are all mindful of the constraints on the State's economy in these difficult times. All seven here before you are collectively requesting an annual appropriation of \$1.5 million--funds that are designated for *increased* operating expenditures on exhibitions, programs, and marketing, making it possible for us to serve more museum goers--children and adults seeking educational experiences and cultural enrichment--who in turn generate income for the State of Connecticut. The seven museums have experience working together on exhibitions, marketing efforts, and the Connecticut Art Trail. The metrics attest to the breadth of our impact on the citizens of Connecticut and the many jobs we support.

Thank you for your consideration, I urge you to support this bill to strengthen Connecticut museums.