

Testimony of Zaiga Antonetti  
Commerce Committee Public Hearing  
February 19, 2015  
LOB 1D  
10:00 AM

RE: SUPPORT OF PROPOSED S.B. 726, AN ACT CONCERNING RENAISSANCE DISTRICTS

Senator Hartley, Representative Perrone members of the Commerce Committee, my name is Zaiga Antonetti. I am a resident of Watertown, Connecticut and am here this morning to testify in support of Proposed S.B. 726, An Act Concerning Renaissance Districts, introduced by Sen. Robert Kane. This bill is unique in that its focus is downtown revitalization based on the existence of multiple arts and cultural sites.

When we think of support for the arts, we often consider the many cultural benefits to our community. What we frequently overlook is the significant positive economic impact derived from the existence of a vital arts sector. The arts not only enrich our souls, they create jobs and enrich local and state economies. Studies have shown that investment in the arts is a good tool for community revitalization.

In short, as a recent study, "Arts & Economic Prosperity IV in the State of Connecticut" concluded, "*The Arts Mean Business.*" The study, released by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, was conducted by "Americans for the Arts" located in Washington, D.C. It is considered the most comprehensive study of its kind. Its findings show that arts and cultural organizations do a good job of leveraging event-related spending by audiences, pumping revenue into a local economy. When patrons attend an arts event they may pay for parking, eat dinner at a local restaurant, shop in local retail stores, have dessert after a show, pay for a baby-sitter, and if from out-of town, they may also pay for lodging. Based on their surveys, researchers found that on average a typical arts attendee spends \$24.60 per event over the price of the ticket, or almost \$50 per couple. That may not sound like a lot, but for small town merchants, such as those in Watertown, that constitutes a significant source of revenue.

Not only is there positive economic impact for a local community, but for the entire region and state as well. During fiscal year 2010, the study found that the aggregate non-profit spending by both Connecticut's arts organizations and their audiences totaled \$653 million, generated over \$33 million in State government revenue, created 18,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and \$25 million in local revenues.

Very small towns such as ours have few resources to help them. We are doing our part in building a vital downtown area. We just need a little bit of help. Supporting SB 726, would help not only Watertown, but the region and State as well. Clearly it is a good short-term and long-term investment on many fronts.

Thank you for the opportunity of presenting this testimony.