

Testimony of Alyson Baker, Executive Director  
The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum  
March 2, 2015  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee

**RE: H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**

Chairwoman Bye, Chairwoman Walker, members of the committee, my name is Alyson Baker and I am the executive director of The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum. I would like to offer the following comments on H.B. 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017 and Making Appropriations Therefor and Other Provisions Related to Revenue.

The Aldrich is a member of a consortium of seven independent leading art museums in Connecticut formed in 2013 – 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; the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury; 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.

First and foremost I want to thank the Administration and the Legislature for including the Consortium as an item in the budget last year. The Consortium was appropriated \$ 525,000. What is unique about our group 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.

For The Aldrich, it helped provide us with the capacity needed to develop educational initiatives that creatively and effectively assist teachers and students in meeting the challenges of the new Common Core State Standards; partner with local schools to offer museum and classroom experiences that enhance their curriculum; produce acclaimed exhibitions of contemporary art and present public programs that engage audiences of all ages.

This direct state funding is essential to the long-term viability of our institutions and to our ability to meet the demands of the expanding roles of our museums within our communities and as economic drivers for the state. We serve our constituencies as educational resources; stewards of our state's history, legacy and identity; places where neighbors meet; and destinations that attract national and international visitors. Collectively we represent a significant impact for Connecticut in creating jobs, generating tourism and increasing State revenue.

Our museums employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within our communities, and market and promote our regions. Every year we are 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. A study in 2012 by AFTA showed that "cultural tourists" spend an average of 65 percent more than other visitors.

We fully understand that these are very difficult financial times for the state. We believe that we have shown that by working together (instead of competing) we have achieved an efficient as well as 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 has a multiplying economic impact of over \$3 million and that the total economic impact of our seven institutions is \$22.45 million.

My colleagues and I hope to have the opportunity to continue to build upon our already significant contribution to Connecticut's "creative" economy and ask that funding for the Consortium remain included under DECD Conservation and Development in this new Biennium Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this request with you on this important issue.