

The Arts Council

of Greater New Haven

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TESTIMONY FOR APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In opposition to: The Proposed DECD Budget within H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING
THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017

Public Hearing Date: March 2, 2015

My name is Cynthia Clair. I'm the executive director of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, a regional arts agency that serves 15 towns, over 120 cultural organizations and hundreds of individual artists. I am also a board member of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide arts advocacy organization.

I am here to address arts funding within the DECD budget. The governor's proposed budget eliminates the arts and culture line items. Although some of those dollars are reallocated to the Arts Commission, the overall result is a devastating **18%** cut to a sector that has already been weakened by substantial budget cuts over the past several years. At a time when growing the economy remains a high priority, I urge you to uphold your investment in arts and culture, an investment with a proven positive return. **Connecticut's arts and culture is a \$653 million industry.** Our industry supports over 18,000 full-time equivalent jobs, which generate \$462.5 million in household income. Connecticut's non-profit arts and culture organizations spend \$455.5 million annually, leveraging \$197.5 in additional spending on restaurants, parking, and hotel rooms. We are essential to tourism—our organizations create the events, the exhibits, performances, and festivals that bring visitors to our state.

As our economy evolves into a knowledge economy, employers need to attract highly skilled, creative employees. A 2012 report by the National Governor's Association, *New Engines of Growth: Five Roles for Arts, Culture and Design*, asserts that, "governors are finding that the arts, culture and design can be important components of a comprehensive strategy for growth.

They touch the economy at crucial leverage points, including innovation, entrepreneurship, employment, and revitalization.”

The arts teach our kids the collaborative, communications and critical thinking skills increasingly required by our changing economy. Many of our organizations provide free and low cost programs both in-school and after school.

In greater New Haven, our region is defined by the arts. We have Tony award winning theaters, free world class art museums, and an international arts festival. Our cultural institutions present free Shakespeare in the park, touring Broadway shows, symphony, jazz and folk concerts; classes in music, dance and theater; and the opportunity to visit artist studios. Our cultural organizations are committed to the community-- they partner with schools, senior centers, the Housing Authority, libraries, and hospitals, with activities that reach a broad spectrum of people.

The arts are vital to our future, integral to creating vibrant communities that will entice businesses, talent and tourists and engage our residents. I urge you to preserve the state’s small investment in arts and culture.

Cynthia Clair
Executive Director