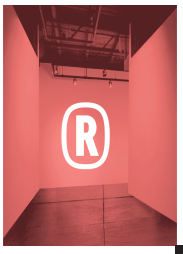

56 Arbor Street Hartford, CT 06106 *p*: 860.232.1006 *f*: 860.233.6691 www.realartways.org *e*: info@realartways.org

REAL ART WAYS

Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut
March 31, 2015

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

I'm writing regarding Real Art Ways, its unique work and significance, and the fundamental importance of state funding to the arts and specifically Real Art Ways. Restructuring state arts support to move from a line item system to a competitive grant effective July 1st 2015 will have a devastating destabilizing effect on our organization and the arts community.

Real Art Ways is a unique resource in the State of Connecticut. It is a 40 year old, innovative, contemporary arts organization with service to community at the heart of its mission. Since 1975 we have been a key figure in the arts community in Hartford providing services and support for generations. Currently our community has tens of thousands of active patrons, supports, and donors.

State line-item funding has been critically important to successfully growing Real Art Ways and competing for and securing funding from sources beyond the State. Real Art Ways has leveraged State support to generate support from highly respected and highly competitive national foundations, including the Wallace Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Warhol Foundation, the McArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the Leonard Nimoy Foundation.

Real Art Ways is many things. It is a movie theater, with innovative film programming every night of the week; it is a contemporary center for visual arts, with 5 gallery spaces presenting between 20 and 25 exhibitions yearly; Real Art Ways is a concert space, a venue for literary events, a place where more than 5,000 school children visit annually, and a gathering spot for community celebrations. It is a place where people from cities and suburbs, from varied cultural backgrounds, young and old, gay, straight and transgendered, come together socially and connect around new ideas, innovation and creativity.

While I understand the state is grappling with a tough budget, in tough financial times, I believe, respectfully, that the budget restructuring of arts funding should be sent back to the drawing board. As proposed, the budget would have a dramatic destabilizing effect on the arts community and the work of Real Art Ways. For years the state has invested in the arts community and radically restructuring the system of support would result in radical destabilization of the arts community and critical local cultural institutions such as Real Art Ways.

Real Art Ways is a singular resource that lifts and invigorates the spirit and potential of our State, with a focus on new art, new ideas, and, most important, connections among people.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Will K. Wilkins
Executive Director