



To: Appropriations Committee; Subcommittee – Conservation & Development  
From: Amy Wynn, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council  
Public Hearing Date: March 2, 2015  
Re: Testimony in opposition of the Governor’s budget for DECD/CT Office of the Arts

Co-Chairs and members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Wynn and I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, serving 25 towns, and I am also on the board of the Connecticut Arts Alliance. I appreciate the enormous task you have before you and the opportunity tonight to, once again, remind you all about the vital role that arts, heritage and tourism play in our state.

Given current arts funding levels, cutting the arts and humanities and tourism will not eliminate Connecticut’s budget gap. **The arts specifically comprise a very small portion of state spending, less than 3 tenths of one percent. Reducing expenditures that modest won’t appreciably affect the state budget, but will damage the cultural sector’s ability to provide jobs, goods and services to communities.** Furthermore, arts cutbacks can lead to much larger financial losses, since arts grantees use the “seal of approval” of state funding to attract dollars from other sources.

Some would say, “what’s a \$2,500 or a \$14,000 cut to an organization going to do?” Well, it could very well mean someone’s job, or the afterschool program that organization provides, or the ability to keep tickets, tuition and fees affordable for community members. You also take away people’s hope and inspiration with cuts like that.

**State arts funding does so much more than provide dollars.** The presence of a strong state arts agency ensures that all communities—regardless of their geographic location, political affiliation or economic status—are systematically and equitably served.

**Incorporating the arts improves the impact of other state policies and services.** Numerous states have recognized this and incorporated the arts into economic revitalization, education, literacy, work-force development, tourism, community sustainability and social service plans.

Hard times require you as public officials to make the most of every asset and to adopt policies that maximize a state’s recovery potential. The arts are a proven part of that mix. **The arts are a recovery asset that supports jobs, stimulates commerce, stabilizes property values and provides many other economic benefits.**

The arts sector has on average been flat funded since 2004. The total funding for the Arts in the current year is 34% less than in FY2008. In the Governor’s proposed budget the arts would receive 43% less than 2008 and cutting the line items and lumping them into an overall reduced arts budget, simply puts more pressure on the sector than it can bear. The sector is faces suffocation with the current proposal.

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In this Governor's administration, Arts, Culture, and Tourism funding is subsumed under the Department of Economic Development comprising about 52% of the DECD's annual budget. The Governor's proposed budget cuts Arts, Culture and Tourism by about 32% from the previous year, about \$7.6 million dollars. The total DECD budget is proposed to decrease by 20%. However, 86% of that decrease is on the backs of arts, cultural and tourism agencies and institutions.

In addition, the Governor's budget proposes to eliminate almost all legislatively-designated grants (Line Items), a total of \$9.5 million in annual grants for major anchor institutions in every major cultural community throughout the State – except for the Amistad Vessel.

The Governor's budget proposes a reduction by about 14% off all arts funding, by eliminating \$4.8 million in legislatively-designated grants, and increasing the non-legislative Arts Commission allocation by \$3.9 million

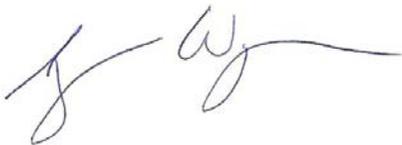
To best support the social, cultural, educational and economic revitalization of Connecticut in 2016-17, I fervently urge you to consider these following recommendations regarding the Biennial Budget:

1. Maintain the funding for the state-designated competitive grant programs in the Arts Commission to at least the current amount of \$1.8 million.
2. Ensure that the Office of the Arts has sufficient staff capacity to manage its grant-making and arts services, with efficiency, integrity, affective approaches, and wise leadership.
3. Maintain support for legislatively designated annual funds for arts producing, presenting and service organizations by returning the \$4.8 million in arts line items cut in the Governors' Budget. Cutting these arts line items as proposed is not strategic.
4. Protect the Connecticut Arts Endowment Fund. Allocate the previously authorized investments into the fund, and return to investing annually at least \$500,000 a year. The last allocation to increase the fund was in 2003 in the amount of \$1 million. Change the Arts Endowment statute's definition of interest and the formula which it relies upon so that the fund can be more effective.

**Imagine what is lost** with reductions to arts funding - the doors closing, the vanished jobs, and the diminished opportunities for growth and enrichment. **Then imagine the opposite** – healthy funding that moves the creative sector closer to realizing its full potential for our State's economic and cultural health.

I ask that you **not make cuts to the State's CT Office of the Arts grant program and begin once again to contribute to the State's Arts Endowment annually.**

Sincerely,



Amy Wynn, Executive Director  
Northwest Connecticut Arts Council  
40 Main Street, Suite 1  
Torrington, CT 06790  
(860) 618-0075  
[www.artsnwct.org](http://www.artsnwct.org)  
Serving 25-towns in Northwest Connecticut