APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

March 2, 2015

TESTIMONY OF

THE BUSHNELL
&
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
CAPA - SHUBERT THEATER
&
PALACE THEATER
&
STAMFORD CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Good evening members of the Committee. My name is Elisabeth Verrastro and I am Director of Development and Communications for the Connecticut Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) and the Shubert Theatre in New Haven.

I am Mike Moran Executive Director of the Palace Theatre - Stamford Center for the Arts.

I am David Fay, President and CEO of the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts and a board member of the Connecticut Arts Alliance (CAA).

I am Frank Tavera the Chief Executive Officer of the Palace Theater in Waterbury and also on the Board of the CAA.

Collectively we represent the 2015-2016 designated funding identified as the "Performing Arts Centers". We are here to voice our concern over the Governor's current budget which includes the elimination of our line item support, a 14% decrease in funding for the arts (close to 30% if one includes heritage and cultural support) and the consolidation of all grant funding to be managed by DECD and the Office of the Arts.

Over the past years during these hearings our four organizations have represented ourselves as independent and unique institutions that although different, share a common mission. Our collective testimony over the past years has illustrated our commitment:

- to serving as vehicles of effective arts and education initiatives in our area schools,
- to serving as gainful employers of both full time and seasonal workers boasting over 750 immediate employees
- to acting as catalyst for economic spending in our communities, annually welcoming over 600,000 patrons generating over $55 million dollars in impact to our local areas
- to improving the quality of life in our communities and working collaboratively with other arts organizations in efforts to make our cities viable places to work, live and play.

As recipients of directed funds, we strongly believe that we have served as good financial stewards of the state funding, consistently leveraging our annual support by insuring a positive return on the state's investment to the Connecticut and its municipalities. One can calculate our ROI to the state at 39 times the level of funding we directly receive, proving the arts is a secure and smart investment in our state economy.

The Governor's elimination of directed funding to our organizations and the proposed consolidation of all granted funds to be administered by DECD/Office of the Arts causes us much concern. In addition to the direct impact this elimination of funding will have on our organizations, we fear that the Office of the Arts, which is currently understaffed and unable to meet the existing demands of the state's arts initiatives, will be ill-equipped to manage this additional responsibility and may subsequently jeopardize our ability to deliver our mission.

We understand the state is facing enormous financial challenges, but we stand united in our request that the Appropriations Committee restore our directed level of funding at the pre-rescission level and allow us the ability to effectively and responsibly manage those funds for the betterment of the state and your constituents.

As "not-for-profit" performing arts centers, who rely on private and public support to insure achievement of our missions, we especially appreciate your acknowledgement of and continued financial support for the critical role we play in enhancing our state through the power of the arts.

We are grateful for your support and leadership. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

THE BUSHNELL

David Fay, President and CEO, Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts

100 YEARS PALACE THEATER

Frank Tavera, CEO, Palace Theater - Waterbury

SHUBERT NEW HAVEN

Elisabeth Verrastro, Director of Development & Communications, Shubert Theatre

THE PALACE

Michael E. Moran, Jr. Executive Director, Palace Theatre - Stamford