

**Mark Ifill-Haney's Testimony on Behalf of The International Festival of Arts and Ideas  
To The Appropriations Committee re: Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget  
(2C)**

Good Evening, Senator Bye , Representative Santiago, Senator Chapin, Representative Zioborn and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Mark Ifill-Haney and I am a senior at New Haven Academy.

Today I am here to speak in favor of returning the \$757,000 line item to the Governor's Budget for the International Festival of Arts and Ideas. I represent students of the Festival's Fellowship Program past, present, and future.

The Declaration of Independence states "To secure our rights, Governments are instituted amongst men, deriving their just powers, from the consent of the governed." So thank you for upholding this essential tradition of our forefathers. And letting me have this time to express my deepest concern about the funding of the International Festival of Arts & Ideas.

The recent budget proposal for 2015-2016 by our Governor has left a significant part of New Haven's culture, the International Festival of Arts & Ideas, laying bare to a very uncertain future. This is not only disheartening to me because New Haven is a melting pot of people who have all kinds of interests and experiences, but the Festival challenges individuals to engage in hundreds of experiences that they would not normally have at their fingertips.

I can personally attest to this as a graduate of the Fellowship Program. A Program which is a semester long and teaches lucky New Haven Public Schools students each year all facets of the Festival and how it is made possible. By creating and supporting the Fellowship Program, the Festival is investing in New Haven's future. The Fellowship Program engages and trains youth in the overlaying virtues of open-mindedness and expression.

There are many lessons I have learned as part of this program. Before I joined the Fellowship program, I thought art was just drawing or writing. But after experiencing the Festival, I know that art is more than that. Art is every form of expression.

Key benchmarks to the success of the Fellowship Program include:

1. Going to performances, ideas events, and exhibits, and exploration of our city
2. Meeting artists, both local and national and international.
3. Meeting and working with The Festival's Board of Directors and Staff, and other New Haven youth.

And all of this has brought to me a greater understanding of public speaking, time management and interpretation skills helpful to me in every facet of my life. Moreover, I have through my association with the Festival developed better organization skills, especially while doing research and writing.

The Festival has a plethora of different art styles to enjoy and the Festival creates an expressive environment for the many interests of our urban youth. Thanks to the Festival my eyes open now to a wider, more diverse world of arts and its intersection with culture, tourism and business.

Finally I will leave you with this thought; What if the Festival didn't exist? Connecticut and Greater New Haven wouldn't be as big a center for the arts. I ask you honorable members of this committee why would we want to change something that is working and working well?

Thank you very much for your time and please return the line item to the Festival and let the world take notice once again this year.

Sincerely,

Mark-Ifill Haney