

Litchfield Jazz Festival DECD Line Item

Patricia Booth

Testimony Appropriations Public Hearing re: Biennial Budget (2c) 3-2-15 630pm.docx

To the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to urge you to restore a \$50,000 Line Item to support Litchfield Jazz Festival awarded through DECD.

Please do not eliminate or decrease the DECD Line Item for Litchfield Jazz Festival. The impact of this program is tremendous.

Each year, the Festival is what drives hundreds of new jazz musicians to come together at the Litchfield Jazz Camp, study with great performers (many of whom were once students at LJC) to then perform in the student tent, so that jazz lovers who come to the festival can see the up-and-coming new artists.

This festival brings about 750% more money to the region than it costs: a tremendous incentive to support it in an area short on other financial draws.

I ask you to support it for more personal reasons. My daughter's high school has cut their jazz program. We cannot afford to pay for much in the way of classes. Through scholarships, she has been a student at LJC for 3 years where she has blossomed into an artist who is confident, knowledgeable and creative. This safe environment draws students from all classes and races to cherish each others' gifts. They live in dorms with students they have little in common with except their love of jazz. And the Festival is the draw!

Fabulous musicians not only perform at the festival but come to be part of the camp, remember their beginnings and support the young artists. It recharges them and my daughter, I know, comes home inspired, driven to create new work, explore new instruments and styles of performing.

The great amount of money it creates for the region will be, of course, the financial reason for supporting it. But in this age where we watch Selma and say, "The work isn't done!" shouldn't we be looking also at a larger gain? To have jazz leaders of all races leading youth, again, of all races and income levels, to work together, create together - this inspires me, any of my generation who marched for civil rights to say, "Here is a place where we have a Utopia. It is these children who will bring the world forward."

Lastly, I want to say, Jazz is an American art form where our African American ancestors created something beautiful using European American instruments. It is now celebrated all over the world. Positive images from a history that needs

them. This is OUR art form! Support it! Don't eliminate the DECD line item for Litchfield Jazz Festival.

Sincerely,
Patricia Booth