

Testimony of Peter Sutton, Executive Director  
Bruce Museum  
March 2, 2015  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee

**RE: H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**

Chairwoman Bye, Chairwoman Walker, members of the committee, my name is Peter Sutton, executive director of the Bruce Museum. I would like to offer the following comments on H.B. 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017 and Making Appropriations Therefor and Other Provisions Related to Revenue.

BRUCE MUSEUM is a member of a consortium of seven independent leading art museums in Connecticut formed in 2013 – the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield; the Bruce Museum in Greenwich; the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme; the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington; the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London; the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, and New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain. Our seven museums offer some of the most exciting and stimulating exhibitions to be found anywhere. Our holdings consist of fine and decorative art treasures of incalculable value. Together we enhance the state's identity as a cultural hub, its attractiveness as a tourism destination, and the unparalleled quality of life found here.

First and foremost I want to thank the Administration and the Legislature for including the Consortium as an item in the budget last year. The Consortium was appropriated \$ 525,000. What is unique about our group is that we have agreed to divide the funding equally between our seven institutions, focusing on unity to attain the flexibility and consistency of steady funding that will enable us to better plan exhibits and programs while strategically targeting our marketing efforts to maximize the use of these funds.

For us at BRUCE MUSEUM the State funding has provided us with the flexibility to apply funds toward direct expenses across a wide range of projects as needed, including exhibitions, education and public programs. In FY 2015, State funding supported the Bruce Museum's major fall art exhibition - *Northern Baroque Splendor: The HOHENBUCHAU COLLECTION from LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections, Vienna*. The Bruce is the inaugural venue - and one of only two U.S. showings - for this selective display of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish masterpieces, offering visitors a glimpse of a remarkable period of artistic creativity with paintings that have long hidden in a private collection.

The State's Directed Local Funds also supported the Museum's *Neighborhood Collaborative* Program, serving roughly 25 regional neighborhood centers, social service organizations, extended school day and Head Start programs. *Neighborhood Collaborative* offers inquiry-based museum instruction at no cost to over 3,500 low-income and at-risk students each year. Using the Museum's exhibitions, the program features hands-on activities that promote critical thinking, and written and oral expression to students in grades PreK – 12 with the greatest need for expanded learning opportunities. *Neighborhood Collaborative* also supports Junior Educators - high school students trained to lead the afterschool museum programs presented to elementary school-age students, providing a positive role model for younger students and a continuum of learning at the Bruce.

Generous support from the State is vital to the Bruce Museum, as it not only helps us to plan a program of innovative exhibitions in art and science that reflect diverse ideas, subjects, and cultural traditions, but also enables us to share the wonders of the museum with children who might not otherwise have the opportunity to visit. With the State's support, the Bruce Museum can expand its reach to include a greater number of students, teachers, and community organizations in our area.

Collectively we also represent a significant impact for Connecticut in creating jobs, attracting visitors and increasing State revenue. Our museums employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within our communities, and market and promote our regions. Every year we are host to hundreds of thousands of visitors from New England, New York and New Jersey and across the country. Our visitors stay in hotels, eat in restaurants and purchase goods in our shops. A study in 2012 by AFTA showed that "cultural tourists" spend an average of 65 percent more than other visitors.

We fully understand that these are very difficult financial times for the state. We believe that we have shown that by working together (instead of competing) we have achieved an efficient as well as an effective way for the State to make a relatively small investment that will bring a very good return. The AFTA report clearly showed that there is a leveraged return of \$6 for every \$1 invested by the State. Therefore, the investment requested by our consortium has a multiplying economic impact of over \$3 million and the total economic impact of our seven institutions is \$22.45 million.

My colleagues and I hope to have the opportunity to continue to build upon our already significant contribution to Connecticut's "creative" economy and ask that funding for the Consortium remain included under DECD Conservation and Development in this new Biennium Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this request with you on this important issue.