



CULTURAL ALLIANCE of WESTERN CONNECTICUT

Testimony for Appropriations Subcommittee on Conservation and Development February 10, 2016

My name is Lisa Scails, Executive Director for the Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut a regional arts agency, based in Danbury and serving towns in Northern Fairfield and Southern Litchfield Counties: **Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, and Sherman**. We promote and advocate for arts, history, and culture as a primary driver of the economy and as an enriching influence for people. I am also Vice President of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide arts advocacy organization.

I want to address arts funding within the DECD budget. There are hundreds of arts, history, and cultural organizations, annual events, festivals and projects that have helped to define the rural and suburban towns that we serve - influencing lives, educating children, connecting with other service providers, and creating a sense of place for people who live there and for those seeking to relocate and to visit.

Creative resources in Western Connecticut contribute to the state's economy The Ives Concert Park serves as an example of many. The Ives is an exquisite outdoor amphitheater with a seating capacity of 5,500, located on the Westside campus of Western Connecticut State University. This non profit organization hosts a variety of world class performances with over 60,000 patrons traveling from all over New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

In every town, we have Cultural Legacies: nonprofit and informal organizations that help to preserve unique culture and heritage, passing a state's precious cultural character and traditions along to future generations. Arts organizations are Civic Catalysts: They have the power to bring people together to share ideas, to be inspired and to engage the community.

I urge you to:

Reinstate the 25% cut in arts funding that is in the Governor's proposed FY17 budget revisions,

- **vote against consolidations of all Office of the Arts line items into one account, DECD Agency Operations**
- **reinstate the Governor's proposed 5.75% cut to the DECD Operations account**
- **prevent any move of arts and culture line item funds from DECD to the Comptroller, and**
- **reinstate the annual contribution to the State's Arts Endowment.**

We recognize the enormity of identifying solutions to the State's financial challenges and thank you for all that you do. However, the arts and cultural sector is a revenue generating sector that provides the state with dollars *that can be used to support those sectors that aren't able to generate funds for the state.* So when you cut funding to us, you also cut revenue that the state can use.

The arts and cultural sector has proven that it is a sound financial investment and an asset for the State's coffers. The State's last **Arts & Economic Prosperity** study convincingly illustrated that investing State dollars in the nonprofit arts and cultural industry pays back more than five and a half times in State revenues what the State provides in funding to the Arts – *and those figures are conservative.*

Thank you for your consideration.

Lisa M. Scails
Executive Director
Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut
287 Main Street
Danbury, CT 06810
Office: 203-798-0760