

To: Appropriations Committee; Subcommittee – Conservation & Development
From: Amy Wynn, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
Date: February 10, 2016
Re: Testimony concerning FY17 budget revisions to the Arts and Culture Sector/DECD

Co-Chairs and members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Wynn and I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, serving 25 towns, and I am also the board chair of the Connecticut Arts Alliance and serve on DECD's Arts Council. I urge you to:

- **reinstate the 25% cut in arts funding that is in the Governor's proposed FY 17 budget revisions,**
- **vote against consolidations of all Office of the Arts line items into one account, DECD Agency Operations**
- **reinstate the Governor is proposed 5.75% cut to the DECD Operations account**
- **to prevent any move of arts and culture line item funds from DECD to the Comptroller, and**
- **to 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 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 quite conservative.**

The CT Arts & Economic Prosperity Study specifically found that Connecticut's nonprofit arts and culture industry annually:

- **Generates \$653 million in total economic activity**
- **Supports 18,314 full-time equivalent local jobs**
- **Generates \$462.5 million in local household income to residents**
- **Delivers \$59.1 million in local and state government revenue**

These impressive numbers are actually understated due to less-than-a-100 percent response rate from Connecticut's arts and culture organizations (329 out of approximately 1,138 in CT responded).

Making cuts and dividing the arts and culture sector between DECD and the Comptroller's Office will not meaningfully contribute to solving the state's budget issues, because the funding represents not even a drop in the buck of the State's budget. Please do not destabilize this sector with cuts and division.

The CT Office of the Arts operates with very high standards of accountability and responsibility. As you hopefully recognize, this is a department that administers a competitive grant program that is a model of integrity. COA follows the national best practices of fair and careful review of all applications as they relate to thoughtfully constructed guidelines, and requires, in turn, accountability through reports from its grant recipients. **Their standards are very high, but the competition within their grant program is increasingly high as funding is diminished at every turn. The stress on COA and the sector is palpable more than ever.**

It is my belief that continued cuts to COA's competitive grant program only causes more organizations to hustle and lobby for line items. These actions diminish the integrity of our state's arts and culture funding process and move away from the state's need for financial accountability and financial management best practices. I am not against lines items per se, but against reducing COA's competitive grant budget line. **This line is worthy of increased funding, and at the very least, no further reductions for FY17.**

The \$1.7 million in arts grants is a drop in the bucket of the State budget, but it is a vital source of support. Our industry does a lot with a little, so every dollar cut is felt deeply. Your previous support of arts funding is sincerely appreciated and we are proud to say not only has your support of the cultural industry been a wise investment financially, but it has contributed in so many ways to our State's quality of life, the education of students, entrepreneurship in business, civic engagement, and democracy. However, **we need funding from the state to the arts and culture sector to stabilize and increase over time.**

The Arts Endowment provides each qualified cultural organization meeting the criteria with some level of operating funding each year from the interest this fund generates. This is an important, although small, source of operating funds for cultural organizations. The applicant pool has been growing, but the fund has not received its annual state allocation for several years.

I ask that you, at the very least, **preserve state funding at the \$1.7 million budget allocation for the State's CT Office of the Arts grant program and the arts and culture line items, and keep all funding – both the competitive grant line and the arts and culture line items – under the DECD where they are handled by staff that understands the sector well. I also ask that you begin once again to contribute to the State's Arts Endowment annually.**

Sincerely,

Amy Wynn, Executive Director
Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
40 Main Street, Suite 1
Torrington, CT 06790
(860) 618-0075

www.artsnwct.org

Serving 25-towns in Northwest Connecticut