

February 16,2016

Angel Fernandez-Chavero  
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**OPPOSITION** to HB No. 5044

Elimination of designated (line item) funding for the Connecticut Humanities Fund

To: The Honorable Beth Bye, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Toni Walker, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Joan Hartley, Vice Chair  
The Honorable Robyn A. Porter, Vice Chair  
The Honorable Robert Kane, Ranking Member  
The Honorable Melissa H. Ziobron, Ranking Member  
Members of the Appropriations Committee

Mesdames Chairs and Members of the Committee,

I joined the board of the Connecticut Humanities not just because I have a nerdy love for them, but because without them, this immigrant from Mexico would not have become a contributing member of society, a proud American, and a 30-plus year resident of Connecticut.

I grew up in Los Angeles. My parents didn't have much formal education, but education was Priority One in our family – and it went beyond school.

Every week, my dad would take us to the library. He wanted to make sure reading would be a regular habit – and that we would master English. We would also pay regular visits to museums – but what I remember most about those trips was the extraordinary respect, verging on religious, that my father had for them.

He told my sisters and me that museums teach us about culture, civic life, intellectual achievement and history, all important if we were to become knowledgeable full participants in society.

This took place in Los Angeles. Yet even today all of Southern California can't come close to the depth or breadth of "little" Connecticut's world-class cultural and historical offerings. My exposure to the humanities doesn't come close to the exposure my wife and daughters have had growing up in Connecticut.

People like me stay despite the cold because Connecticut is a mecca of history and culture. Those are two attributes that contribute greatly to quality of life, and are tough to duplicate.

I respectfully urge this committee to take the long view and not let two of Connecticut's strongest advantages decay. It's during difficult budget times like these that we should double down on what draws people to visit, work, and live in Connecticut. How else can we build our tax base?

Instead, let's build up the Connecticut Humanities by continuing its direct funding. We'll leverage federal dollars *and* strengthen Connecticut's humanities nonprofits. We'll make Connecticut more competitive in the national and global economies. Even better, Connecticut will continue to be a great place to raise a family where we all can learn again and again how fortunate we are to be Americans.

Thank you.