Esteemed Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing today to advocate for the recommendations submitted by the Lamont-Bysiewicz Arts, Culture and Tourism Policy Committee in support of the State's creative sector, and specifically the enhancement of the Tourism Fund, PA 17-2. This must be a key element of our State's economic development strategy, and is supported by studies indicating a 7-to-1 return on investment. The high quality of life scores that Connecticut has consistently achieved are supported and will be enhanced by further strategic investment by the State in arts, culture, and tourism as proven catalysts for economic growth.

The recommendation of the Committee, to adjust the portion of the lodging tax revenue from 10% to 25%, would fund this essential investment in arts, culture, and tourism. We advocate that this be referred to as the Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund and support State-wide marketing initiatives, with 40% of expenditures earmarked for cultural investments, and 60% for tourism promotion. We should reward excellence and groups with a proven track record of quality, diversity, and innovation.

We are a small State with extraordinary cultural heritage resources, and we must aim to create a comprehensive and collaborative promotional approach to effectively appeal to visitors. The presence of international air service to Bradley Airport should greatly expand our marketing reach in conjunction with the development of multiple itineraries to appeal to different target audiences.

Most of Connecticut's cultural heritage resources are urban based, and increased investment would be a catalyst to continue to restore vibrancy to our cities. Successful investments will appeal to a younger regional population being priced out of New York and Boston, and build an appealing environment to encourage our Connecticut educated millennials to remain here.

Thank you for your consideration,

Carol LeWitt
Yale University Art Gallery
Governing Board, Chair