

Testimony in Support of

H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.

TO: Co-Chair Senator Osten, Co-Chair Representative Walker, Vice-Chair Senator Hartley, Vice-Chair Representative Dathan, Vice-Chair Representative Nolan, Ranking Member Senator Minor, Ranking Member Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Brett Thompson and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide membership organization representing more than 100 arts institutions, arts professionals, artists and arts advocates across the state. We are a nonprofit organization that advocates for the resources the arts community needs to thrive, advises decision makers on the needs and opportunities of the arts sector to inform policy work, and organizes members of the arts community to share expertise, experience, and resources. Through this work, we help ensure that the arts are always a vital part of life for people of all ages across the state.

Regarding the Governor's proposed budget adjustments for fiscal year 2023, we ask you to please support \$27.5 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (\$15 million in FY23 and \$12.5 million in FY24) to support free museum admission for children and an accompanying adult. During its first year of implementation, the program was instrumental in addressing learning loss by school children due to the COVID pandemic, offered better access to the educational benefits of cultural resources to children from economically challenged households, and was a lifeline for cultural institutions facing loss of admission fees. The impact of the pandemic remains a serious issue both for the education of our children and the survival of our cultural institutions. This funding supports a program that effectively addresses both of these important issues.

We also respectfully ask that you support A Voice for All, an initiative proposed by Connecticut Arts Alliance to build a stronger, more inclusive statewide arts network. We ask for \$85,000 in state funds that will be leveraged to:

- Amplify the voices of under-represented communities and provide a more inclusive picture of the arts sector and its components;
- Expand our membership with a focus on increasing diversity and inclusion in our statewide arts network;
- Increase the use of technology to allow greater access to statewide engagement in arts policy;

- Create strong partnerships with other statewide cultural and tourism organizations such as Connecticut Humanities and Connecticut Tourism Coalition;
- Capitalize on state resources through collaboration with agencies that offer services and expertise;
- Increase the capacity of Connecticut Arts Alliance in its work as a statewide advocate for the arts;
- Identify issues common to the statewide arts community to facilitate cooperation and collaboration; and
- Produce recommendations to legislative leadership to inform their work.

We will be sure to share details of this important initiative in the coming days.

Finally, we thank you for recognizing the importance of the arts sector and the devastating effects of the pandemic including precipitous revenue loss, mass layoffs and threat of closure. Your leadership in the last legislative session resulted in unprecedented support from the state. We are particularly appreciative of the \$30.7 million in funding you provided to Connecticut Humanities in partnership with Connecticut Office of the Arts that provides critical operating support for cultural institutions. Over the past two months, Connecticut Humanities has awarded \$16 million in operating support grants to 624 arts and humanities organizations across Connecticut and an additional \$3 million to 14 regional and statewide-focused partners that work to support and strengthen the state's cultural sector. We applaud your efforts while recognizing that the pandemic continues to have lasting impact on the sector. We ask that you continue to provide support that reflects the sectors importance to our state's economic health, the vibrancy of our communities and the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Connecticut's cultural community.



Brett Thompson
Executive Director
Connecticut Arts Alliance