# Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
# JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5443 / Bill Status / Public Hearing Testimony

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALES AND USE TAXES RATE FOR AND APPLICABILITY TO CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLES, PEER-TO-PEER CAR SHARING, CERTAIN PERSONAL PROPERTY USED IN BURIALS AND CREMATIONS AND ELECTRICITY FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY BUSINESSES, DEDICATING FUNDING FOR THE TOURISM FUND AND INCREASING THE EXEMPTION AMOUNT FOR SALES TAX-FREE WEEK.

**Vote Date:** 3/31/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/11/2026

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:*** *The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

## SPONSORS OF BILL:

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

## REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would ameliorate the tax burden on Connecticut residents by increasing both the sales and use tax exemption amount for certain personal property used in burials and cremations and the exemption amount for Sales Tax-Free Week, as well as adding backpacks. The bill would also subject peer-to-peer car sharing platforms or companies to the 9.35% tax that car rental companies are subject to, effectively leveling the playing field for car renting and car sharing services. The bill also attempts to make purchasing new vehicles more attainable by increasing the sales price threshold for a motor vehicle subject to the 7.75% sales and use tax. Finally, the bill hopes to support tourism by dedicating 50% of the additional 1% sales and use tax on meals to the Tourism Fund.

## SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

This substitute language raises the motor vehicle price threshold for the higher 7.75% sales tax from $50,000 to $75,000, increases the Sales Tax-Free Week exemption limit from $100 to $300, and expands the tax exemption for burial and cremation-related personal property from $2,500 to $10,000, meaning more purchases in each category would be subject to lower or no sales tax.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None expressed.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Olivia Almagro** supports the bill because it would support community arts organizations like the Artist Collective. She believes that cutting programs that support he cultural, educational, and economic fabric of Connecticut would be a disservice to our state and future generations.

**Robin Andreoli. Director of Development, The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center** supports the bill as he believes it would provide essential support to our state's cultural institutions. She represents the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center and believes this bill would help further support workforce development, economic development, and cultural vibrancy in our state.

**Anonymous 59, Anonymous 59** supports the bill as state funds would help ensure that arts, music, and culture continue to be supported in Connecticut. He shared an anecdote about his daughter and her enjoyable and formative experiences in art school.

**Diana Barnhard** supports the bill because of the support they believe it will provide to collections and museum assessments.

**Eric Berthel, State Representative** supports the bill because he believes that updating the luxury car tax threshold will help reduce the tax burden on Connecticut residents. He also shared that he believes it will have a positive impact on consumers and auto dealers around the state.

**Jennifer Billingsley, Portland Public Library** supports this bill because of the funding support it would provide in strengthening local libraries across the state. Billingsley shared an anecdote of an oral history project that would not have been possible without tourism funding support.

**Noah Bloom, Executive Director, Neighborhood Music School** supports this bill on behalf of the Neighborhood Music School, particularly highlighting its role as an economic and tourism driver in the state. Bloom shares that this support will bring people into localities across the state.

**Brian Boye, Board Member, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council** supports this legislation because they believe that it will help drive tourism and help support spaces in towns where communities can gather, connect, and express themselves.

**Rev. Lyndell Brown, President, 224 EcoSpace** supports the bill on behalf of 244 EcoSpace. He believes that tourism Is vital to education, workforce development, cultural preservation, and the overall well-being of our state.

**Lois Bruinooge, Executive Director, Last Green Valley, Inc.** supports the bill on behalf of The Last Green Valley, Inc. Bruinooge highlighted the work that smaller arts, culture and

history organizations do and how critical state funds are to maintaining infrastructure, expanding amenities, and promoting their work.

**Sarah Burns, Board of Director, Hartford Symphony Orchestra** supports the bill because of the positive impact that local funding can have on students, particularly how arts education can provide significant positive impacts on students' academic, social, and emotional outcome in schools. On behalf of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Burns shares that their concerts, as well as their Learning and Social Impact programming bring high quality educational opportunities to learners in the greater Hartford region and beyond.

**Steph Burr, Executive Director, Northwest Community Arts Council** supports this bill because they believe that the lack of state funding is decorrelate with the vibrant arts ecosystems across the state. Burr shared statistics that highlight the lags in state support for tourism funding and likes that this bill seeks to provide adequate support to working artists and the local infrastructure that supports them.

**Ingrid Bushwack**
**Joy Ford**
**Danielle Giroux**
**Bridget C. Guzzardi** provided general support for the bill.

**Magaly Cajigas, Board Chair, Arts Council for Greater New Haven** provided testimony in support of this bill, sharing that they have benefitted from the arts and culture events in the region. They also shared how these cultural institutions often serve underserved community and provided data to highlight the importance of state funding for these programs.

**Lou Chen, CEO, INTEMPO** supports this bill because of the negative impacts of the loss of federal funds. They also highlighted the important work of arts and cultural organizations like INTEMPO.

**Jasmine Bailey**
**Glenn Cheney**
**Susan Clinard**
**Aaron Goode**
supports this bill as a working artist who believes in strong investment in the state's arts communities.

**Tiana Correa, Greater Hartford Arts Council** supports the bill, recounting personal experiences of the impact that arts organizations around the city of Hartford left a lasting impact on them.

**Anonymous, Anonymous**
**Patricia Brett, Board Member, Arts Council for Greater New Haven**
**Bill Carbone, Executive Director, Rock and Soul Forever Foundation**
**Elaine Carroll, CEO, New Haven Symphony Orchestra**
**Steve Collins, CEO Hartford Symphony Orchestra**
**Wendy Costa, Plein Air Litchfield**
**John Cusano**
**Rufus de Rham**

**Bobby Dellacamera, Association Director of Development, Festival of Arts and Ideas**
**Eric Dillner, CEO, Shoreline Arts Alliance**
**Jacqueline Downing**
**Samantha Downing, Weston Historical Society**
**Jose Feliciano, Lead Consultant and Business Owner, Jose Feliciano**
**Robert Ferguson, Executive Board, Irish Great Hunger Museum**
**Karen Fisk, Executive Director, Stowe Center for Literary Activism**
**Jill Fletcher, Director of Development, Ball & Socket Arts**
**Matt Fleury, President & CEO, Connecticut Science Center**
**Michael Lewis Forino, Ph.D.**
**Jose Garaycochea, Executive Director, Expressiones Cultural Center**
**IfeMichelle Gardin, Kulturally LIT, Literary Arts Organization**
**Jeremy R. Geller, Friends of Valley Falls**
**Peter H. Gistelinck, Executive Director, Avon Theatre Film Center**
**Leah S. Glaser, Professor of History**
**Rebecca Goodheart, Elm Shakespeare Company**
**Vilma Gregoropoulos, Chairman, 250th Celebration Committee**
**H. Kaye Griffin, Board of Trustees, Florence Griswold Museum**
supports the bill because of the positive impacts arts and cultural funding has on economic development, cultural vibrance, and civic and community health. They highlighted the positive impacts this legislation would have on the institutions and organizations that they are testifying on behalf of.

**Denise Davies** shared their experiences as they studied oral history. They highlighted the importance of oral history and the support that this bill would provide to these programs.

**Chris Davis, Vice President of Public Policy, CBIA** supports section 4 and section 2 of the bill. Section 4 would exempt biotechnology companies from the sales tax on electricity, which Davis shared would reduce major operational costs for an energy-intensive industry. Davis supports section 2 as he shares that dedication a greater portion of tax revenue would help grow our food, entertainment, and hospitality industries.

**Nicole Dolat, Youth Services Librarian, Bloomfield Public Library** support this bill, particularly highlighting the importance of libraries in communities around our state.

**Amy Dooling, Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Connecticut College** supports this bill, highlighting some of the regional cultural institutions in the Greater New London region, like the Lyman Allyn Art Museum and the Mystic Seaport Museum.

**Magdalene Fin, Visual Art Teacher, 9-12** supports this bill as an educator who sees firsthand the positive impact of arts education.

**Michael Finley, Senior Director of Government Affairs, Mystic Aquarium** supports this bill, highlighting the work that Mystic Aquarium has done to draw tourism into the region and the positive economic impact that the aquarium has had in the region.

**Jodie Gillon, BioCT**
**Jeanna Grasso, Director, Connecticut Bioscience Growth Council** supports this bill because they believe that a sales use tax exemption for electricity for research and

development would be a significant investment in Connecticut's life sciences sector. They share that this exemption will provide relief and reinforce Connecticut's position as a competitive site for research-based life science industries.

**Noah Golden** shared their support of the bill and provided personal a personal anecdote regarding his positive experiences working with the Arts Council of Greater New Haven.

**Johnathan Greene, President and Legislative Chair, Connecticut Funeral Directors** supports section three of this bill that would increase the sales tax exemption for personal property sold by funeral service establishments. They support this legislation because funeral services provide essential and meaningful services when families of the deceased are mourning loss. Through this tax exemption, Greene shares that this will provide practical financial relief to families arranging funeral services. Furthermore, it will clarify the scope of exempt personal property, which would ensure that policy is applied in a way that reflects the realities of funeral service.

**Willie Hallihan, Board member, Salisbury Winter Sports Assoc.:** Mr. Hallihan supports this legislation as it will benefit and promote businesses throughout Connecticut.

**Mr. Henry Haskell** Haskell supports this legislation, specifically the provision dedicating a portion of the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs across the state. He stated that the federal funding cuts make it essential for the state to employ support and reliable funding.

**Dan Hayden, Executive Director-New England Civil War Museum-:** Mr. Hayden supports this legislation for dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund to support cultural organizations and with respect to the increased investment in the tourism fund. Without the funding that has allowed CT Humanities to offer self-learning and professional consultation, we would not have had the ability to create these experiences for thousands of state residents and out-of-state visitors. Mr. Hayden also expressed how there is nothing more powerful for human connection and change than by giving someone the opportunity to hear another perspective.

**Debra Healy, Development-Seven Angels: Theater:** Ms. Healy supports this legislation with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund.

**Kimberly Henrikson, Executive Director-Center for Contemporary:** Ms. Henrikson supports dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the Tourism Fund to support cultural organizations and with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. Ms. Henriksen explained how Connecticut Office of the Arts and CT Humanities provide important support and guidance to nonprofit cultural organizations and accountability on behalf of Connecticut residents, and it is essential to pass this bill to increase support.

**Helen Higgins, Board member, CT Humanities:** Mr. Higgins supports this legislation due to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. He believes that investments in this sector will benefit Connecticut through job retention and new hires and will bring business to hotels, restaurants, and retail. It can also benefit the education sphere through supplying field trips, materials, and digital resources. And this investment would foster pride and community.

**Desire Hinkson-Supports:** Supports this legislation, particularly the provision dedicating a portion of the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs throughout Connecticut. Ms. Hinkson highlights how funds like these have helped her professionally grow and the funding loss limited these opportunities and caused output into the city to decrease and disappear.

**Shauna Holiman, Chair Board of Trustees:** Ms. Holiman supports this legislation due to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. Ms. Holiman explains how her performing arts company and many others are struggling or entering a danger zone due to federal budget cuts.

**Andy Horowitz-:** Mr. Horowitz supports this legislation due to the increased investment in the Tourism Fund. He emphasizes how the arts and humanities within Connecticut, cities, towns, and communities are essential for happiness, connection, and prosperity. Mr. Horowitz specifically emphasizes CT Humanities as it aims to support and encourage nonprofit cultural organizations of all kinds within Connecticut.

**Susan Huizenga, Volunteer Executive Director-WPAA-TV Community Media Center:** Ms. Huizenga supports the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund and urges the committee to pass this bill to make it possible to increase support for CT Humanities and Connecticut Office of the Arts.

**Fred Huntington-Friends of Samuel Smith Farm-Supports:** Mr. Huntington highlights how state funds have allowed The John Johnson House to be preserved, which has supplied a community space and has perpetuated research regarding John Johnson.

**Eric Hutchinson, Director of Development-Hartford Symphony Orchestra-:** Mr. Hutchinson supports dedicating a portion of the Meals Tax to the Tourism Fund to support cultural organizations, as he believes it is essential to sustaining Connecticut's cultural sector and how the arts support the state economically, educationally, and in regard to community vitality as well.

**Ren-e Jaworski, Executive Co-Artistic Director, Pilobolus, supports :** Ms. Jaworski was in support of the increased investment in the Tourism Fund. She believes that these funds could deepen the roots and expand the impact that her dance company has on the state. This support would allow artistic companies to engage many students, educators, and community members in Connecticut through workshops, residencies, and public events, and she urges the committee to pass this legislation, noting how federal arts funding uncertainty makes investments like this essential.

**Nathan Jedziniak:** Mr. Jedziniak supports this legislation for dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund to support cultural organizations. He highlights his work experience in the public history field at the Noah Webster House and the Nathan Hale Homestead, where he taught children the history of our state in a hands-on manner, which is why he believes this bill will provide great value to Connecticut.

**Michael Jehle, Executive Director-Fairfield Museum-Supports :** Mr. Jehle supports this legislation in respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. He stated how Fairfield Museum has benefited southwestern Connecticut, and as a previous member of

CT Humanities' Grant Review Board, he has firsthand seen how these investments can leverage broader support and success for organizations like the Fairfield Museum, and he believes due to the aftermath of NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations, this legislation is necessary.

**Jessica Jenkins, Executive Director-Litchfield Historical Society:** Ms. Jenkins supports this legislation for dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund to support cultural organizations. She explained how her small organization relies on this support, which allows it to benefit our community and state. She urges the committee to pass this legislation due to the aftermath of NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and for the impact it will have on this sector.

**Zoe Jensen, Support for HB05443-Connecticnt Magazine-:** Ms. Jensen specifically supports the provision in this legislation that dedicates a portion of the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs in Connecticut. Stable, reliable state funding for Connecticut's creative sector would allow artists to have stability and reliability. She urges the committee to pass this legislation due to the reduction in federal support.

**Christine Jewell, Artist - Educator-Devotions Works LLC-Supports :** Ms. Jewell supports this legislation with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. She stated that the arts and humanities are what make our country great and what bring people together to share in our communities and how our world would be a sad place without it. Thousands of people economically contribute by attending arts and humanities experiences by purchasing gas or coffee on the way to these events, and it's imperative to support the civic and community health that the arts and culture supply. Ms. Jewell urges the committee to pass this bill so increased support is possible.

**Christine Johnson, Library Director—Waterford Public Library:** Ms. Johnson stated how support from CT Humanities has allowed her library to offer programs that deliver rich, literature-based experiences for children from birth to five. This funding allows these programs to be free, ensuring that all young children in our community have access to early learning literature opportunities and strengthens our ability to connect residents with local history and civic life and further funding will allow for a variety of new historical learning experiences. She urges the committee to pass this bill as continued investment in CT Humanities ensures that libraries like ours can expand access to free educational programming and local history celebrations and bring purposeful cultural experiences to communities across Connecticut.

**Faithlyn Johnson, Executive Director-ActUp Theater Inc:** Ms. Johnson stated how arts, humanities, and cultural organizations are essential drivers of economic activity and community well-being across our state. Theaters like her own contribute to Hartford's cultural life while supporting close-by restaurants, shops, and small businesses. Through creating opportunities for young artists to perform, theaters allow our communities to be desirable and afford the opportunity to explore important social issues, build empathy, confidence, and leadership, and engage in purposeful dialogue. She urges the committee to pass this legislation due to the aftermath of NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and for the impact it will have on this sector.

**Christine Kim, Alder - Ward 7-City of New Haven-:** Ms. Kim stated how the Audubon Arts District is an economic engine, as it drives foot traffic to local restaurants and businesses, attracts tourism, and supplies employment. She also expressed how this legislation supplies a remedy to this sector's underfunded. Ms. Kim believes that this legislation is sound and self-reinforcing, as the arts and cultural sector generates the exact economic activity that the meals tax captures. Dedicating a share of that meal's tax revenue to the Tourism Fund is an investment in the sector that creates it, which is fair. This would transform communities like New Haven, as they would gain access to more reliable funding to support artists, creative entrepreneurs, and cultural nonprofits. Smaller organizations that often fall through would be better positioned to hire, plan, and prosper. New art businesses would find a stronger environment to launch. For freelance artists, independent musicians, muralists, teaching artists, and small nonprofit leaders, stable statewide funding signals to them that Connecticut values them and wants them to stay. Ms. Kim urges the committee to report HB 5443 favorably, as this bill is a rare opportunity to form a sustainable foundation for Connecticut's creative economy with minimal cost and maximum impact.

**Lisa Kim, Artistic Director-New Haven Ballet:** Ms. Kim stated how art organizations akin to her ballet company play an important role in the cultural and economic vitality of Connecticut, as when families attend performances or programs, they support nearby restaurants, small businesses, and the downtown district energy. Art programs like these strengthen communities, expand opportunities for young people to partake, and help draw visitors and families to Connecticut's cultural life.

**Jonathan Kozak, Communications Manager-Connecticut League of Museums:** Mr. Kozak supports this legislation for dedicating a portion of the Meals Tax to the Tourism Fund to support cultural organizations. He expressed that after his wife completed her service in the U.S. Navy, it was the museums, cultural institutions, and deep sense of history that made them want to live in Connecticut. Living in Connecticut inspired him to pursue public history so he could help share Connecticut's story with others, and funding the humanities is essential to make this work possible. He explained how his experiences with museum professionals and programs are directly tied to workforce development since they help students build skills and professional networks needed to remain in Connecticut's cultural sector. Mr. Kozak connected with a team at Wesleyan University, where they created an oral history lab recording the stories of people across Connecticut, and without the resources that support humanities organizations, these voices could easily be lost. Investing in the humanities strengthens cultural vibrancy, builds community, and promises that Connecticut continues to be a place where people want to live and work. He urges the committee to pass this legislation due to the aftermath of NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and for the impact it will have on this sector.

**Jenny Krauss:** Ms. Krauss supports this legislation, specifically the provision dedicating a portion of the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs across Connecticut. She is dismayed regarding the lack of exhibition opportunities for local visual artists, and her goal is to supply artists with solo exhibitions so they can be recognized for their work. Connecticut artists need to be supported through grants so they can have the time and buy the materials they need in order to create. She believes that this legislation will ensure stable, reliable state funding for our creative sector and urges the committee to pass it, especially because of federal support reductions.

**Robert Kret, Executive Director and CEO-CT Museum of Culture and History-:** Mr. Kret believes that this legislation is the most significant opportunity in years to stabilize and strengthen Connecticut's cultural sector. Mr. Kert stated how Connecticut's cultural organizations are the backbone of the state's cultural tourism sphere, as they attract visitors and give business to restaurants, local businesses, and hotels, which makes our community more vibrant and competitive. However, this sector remains underfunded in relation to its potential; however, this bill begins to correct that. Mr. Kret believes that this is a strategic reinvestment, and supporting this legislation is an investment in the future of Connecticut, which is why he urges the committee to pass this bill.

**Peter Kyle, President of the Board—Connecticut Dance Alliance:** Mr. Kyle supports this bill for dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the Tourism Fund to support cultural organizations. He explained how the Connecticut Dance Alliance supplies educational attainment, cultural vibrancy, and support for artists. He urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations, and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Douglas Laustsen, Executive Director-Cultural Alliance of FC:** Mr. Laustsen supports this legislation with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund, which provides robust funding for our state's cultural organizations. He believes that investing in this work through a meals tax will increase the tax base for the state while encouraging outside audiences to spend their money here. Other institutions in this sector, like libraries and museums, supply educational programs that enhance education for the youth. This sector supplies vibrancy and will only make our state more desirable. He urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations, and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Wendell Livingston, President-Historic Rowayton:** Mr. Livingston urges the committee to vote in favor of this bill. The arts are vital and must be preserved, especially due to the federal funding reduction. They enrich us and make us more thoughtful and appreciative of other cultures.

**Vanessa Logan, Managing Director, Goodspeed Musicals:** Ms. Logan supports this bill, particularly the provision dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the Tourism Fund. She explains how this sector is not only culturally impactful but also impacts workforce development, educational opportunity, and economic activity rooted in rural Connecticut. Especially in larger communities, arts institutions can be one of the most visible and reliable anchors of the local economy. This bill is a practical step toward a more dependable and stronger future for the state.

**Melody Lozano, Coordinator-LALCC-:** Ms. Lozano stated how Connecticut Humanities' support has been vital not only to the LALCC but also to the broader Connecticut public they serve. Quick Grants from Connecticut Humanities have allowed the LALCC to organize and supply a range of public humanities programs that connect communities across the state with Latin American, Latino, and Caribbean history and culture. Connecticut Humanities funding has supplied experiences and opportunities that inspire students, which is why she urges the committee to pass this bill so that Connecticut Humanities can continue its work and allow more people to have these experiences**.**

**Marilyn Mackay:** Supports this legislation.

**Kathleen Maher, Executive Director, Barnum Museum Foundation Inc-:** Ms. Maher supports this legislation, urging continued support for Connecticut's vital arts, cultural, and tourism institutions. She stated how state funding is essential due to the suspended federal funding and threats regarding the National Endowment for the Humanities and for the arts. Federal funding freezes affect all cultural institutions across the state as organizations are being forced to make cuts, which threatens education and historical perseverance. Ms. Maher believes that with a collective effort, we can guarantee future prosperity. Without this support, cultural organizations and museums risk their ability to serve our community.

**Mary Ann Mahony, Professor and Center Director-CCSU-:** Ms. Mahony highlights the importance of CT Humanities support has been for the LALCC as their grants have helped make strong connections to local cultural organizations. The funding has been a catalyst of all these positive developments, which is why she urges the committee to pass this bill.

**Jeffrey Mainville, Executive Director-Noah Webster House:** Mr. Mainville, who attests that small- to medium-sized nonprofit museums and cultural institutions of all types in Connecticut are in real need of support right now. As threats to funding sources are extremely widespread and technology threatens museums as well and stable funding can help with this.

**Elaine Malchman:** Supports this legislation.

**Jason Mancini, Executive Director-CT Humanities-:** Mr. Mancini strongly encourages investment in Connecticut's cultural sector. Urgent priorities cannot be fixed without systems of support for the civic and cultural infrastructure. For the most part, private and public funding for arts and humanities is diminishing, affecting libraries and museums. Two funds of $30.7 million from Covid-19 allowed for the creation of the CT Cultural Fund, which fostered prosperity throughout the state which is why this legislation is being urged to pass.

**Eric March-Supports:** Mr. March supports this legislation, specifically the provision dedicating a portion of the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs across Connecticut.

**John Matthiessen, English Teacher, Branford High School,:** Mr. Matthiessen supports this legislation with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. Programs such as Poetry Out Loud are funded by the COA and allow many children to benefit and be inspired. He urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations, and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Emily Mattina, Artistic Director, Shakesperience:** Ms. Mattina supports this legislation with respect to the need for increased investment in the tourism fund. The mission of her productions is enhanced by state agencies like CT Humanities and COA as they supply guidance and support. He urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Michelle McCabe, Executive Director-Connecticut Main Street Center:** Mr. McCabe supports this legislation, as he believes it will provide the much-needed funding to strengthen the arts and culture sector and simultaneously support main streets and downtowns. Arts and culture contribute to making a great downtown as they serve as anchor institutions for the community and bring economic activity and create jobs; however, the arts are trying to adjust to post-pandemic consumer behaviors. The federal threat cuts for arts and culture—we need to invest in support for the industry. The COA and Connect Humanities supply funds and other support; however, there needs to be an increased investment, as it will in turn grow Connecticut's economy.

**Mark McEachern, Executive Director-Torrington Historical Society:** Mr. McEachern strongly supports this bill with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. Their organization receives grants from CT Humanities and the COA, and this legislation boost to those grants will benefit cultural organizations such as their history museum. CT Humanities and the COA have supplied support and guidance to nonprofit cultural organizations and accountability on behalf of Connecticut residents. He urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Chris Mcnaboe, Ceo-Horizons Programs Inc.-:** Mr. Mcnaboe supports this bill with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. Mr. McNaboe explains how Willimantic is an economically depressed region and one of the poorest towns in CT and how CT Humanities and the COA have supplied support and guidance to nonprofit cultural organizations and accountability on behalf of Connecticut residents. He urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Ann Marie Mesquitta, Actress and Model:** Ms. Mesquita supports this bill with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. With a CT Humanities Grant, she was able to work with the Connecticut Alliance for Better Communities, Inc. dba The Hartford Guardian to tell her story after an absence from the media. Due to telling her story, she ignited her fanbase and inspired other victims of screen credit theft to speak out and reclaim their work. The CT Humanities Grant also allowed her to participate in workforce development so she could hire locally, enabling her to do field trips to archives in New London. The CT Humanities Grant truly gave her the opportunity to get her story out again and to help other history students hone their research and writing skills. Ms. Mesquitta urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Dana Meyer, Digital Projects Manager-Connecticut League of Museums:** Ms. Meyer stated how past support from Connecticut Humanities has made the Connecticut League of Museums and CTCo work possible, and continued investment through the Tourism Fund will allow them to maintain this equitable model while supplying critical support to museums in Connecticut that lack the resources to sustain their collections. CTCo functions as a shared cultural infrastructure for Connecticut which allows small institutions to participate in digital preservation and public access systems that would otherwise be unattainable. Connecticut's cultural institutions are also drivers of local economic activity and tourism as visitors become consumers of restaurants, hotels, and other businesses, generating the meals tax revenue.

Therefore, relocating a portion of this revenue to the Tourism Fund is a direct, reciprocal investment. Ms. Meyers urges the committee to pass this bill.

**Karimah Mickens, Founder-Amplify the Arts Festival:** Mr. Mickens supports this legislation, specifically the provision that would dedicate a portion of the existing meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs across Connecticut. Through his work in the community, he has firsthand seen how art and culture strengthen the economy and bring life to the community, yet this sector is vulnerable when funding shifts. Recent federal reductions have added strain, and Connecticut benefits from the work of the COA and CT Humanities, and this legislation is a practical and thoughtful solution.

**Sandra Miklave, Executive Director-Norwalk Symphony Orchestra:** Ms. Miklave supports this legislation for dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund to support cultural organizations. Audiences who attend shows at The Norwalk Symphony also drive economic development within the town through dining, shopping, and hotels. Ms. Miklave urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Tracy Liz Miller, Producing Artistic Director-Connecticut Theatre Exchange:** Ms. Miller is in support of this tax allocation that will go to the tourism and arts of Connecticut. The creative economy is essential to a healthy community and for supporting local businesses and economic growth.

**Frank Mitchell-CTHumanities:** Mr. Mitchell supports this bill for dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund to support cultural organizations. He is grateful for the continued support of Connecticut legislators. Mr. Frank stated how state support has been essential this year with uncertain federal funds for the humanities and as they adjust to the current administration while affirming Connecticut's place in the country's history. Mr. Frank urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Jane Montanaro, Executive Director-Preservation Connecticut:** Ms. Montanaro supports this bill with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund. He stated how increasing funding for organizations like the COA and the Connecticut Humanities means that more museums and cultural organizations will have a larger impact. The cultural sector contributes to Connecticut's success by fostering a sense of community for people who may feel like outsiders while also instilling pride in underrepresented communities. Ms. Montanaro urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year's destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations and mainly for the impact of this sector.

**Rebekah Moore, Program Director-Arts Council of GNHV:** Ms. Moore supports this legislation, specifically the provision dedicating a portion of the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs across Connecticut. She stated that it is imperative that we sustain funding that will continue to allow this sector to prosper. The arts are a profession that supplies housing, food, and other necessities for families, which is another reason as to why this bill is imperative.

**Jeffrey Moreno, Board Member-ACGNH-:** Mr. Moreno strongly supports this legislation, as it takes a thoughtful approach. Arts and cultural organizations play a vital role in strengthening local economies and enhancing life quality. They aid in activating downtown and neighborhood business corridors, support restaurants and small businesses, and create welcoming spaces where citizens of all ages and backgrounds can connect. For arts organizations and artists, strong funding stability is critical as it permits them to retain staff, plan multi-year programming, fairly compensate creative workers, and expand access to cultural opportunities in communities that have historically experienced limited investment. These investments also create purposeful opportunities for students and families to engage with the arts. Policies like HB 5443 recognize the economic impact and how cultural infrastructure is also economic infrastructure. Mr. Moreno respectfully urges the committee to support HB 5443 and to maintain the provision regarding the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund.

**Sarah Morin, Board Director-Hartford Symphony Orchestra:** Ms. Morin supports this legislation, particularly the provision dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund. Sustained investment through the Tourism Fund is essential to these arts, culture, and community programs statewide, as it will allow Connecticut to be a destination that promises a rich arts & culture scene, which will strengthen our state's economy.

**Michele Murelli, Director-Art Tripping:** Art making is medicine, accessible and therapeutic. Art making is the historic sign that a society is stable; it is through art/artifacts that we understand cultures that have disappeared. It is a fundamental aspect of human life to create and express ourselves. Art gives the soul a visual voice, and we need that now more than ever. Replace lost funding with this reallocation of sales tax dollars.

**Wendy Nasta, Founding Director-Artists for World Peace:** Ms. Nasta is in complete support of dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund to support cultural organizations. She appreciates state funding that her organization has received, as it has allowed them to prosper and contribute to society economically and urges the committee to support this legislation.

**Maryann Ott, Retired Executive Director-NewAlliance Foundation:** Ms. Ott supports this legislation, specifically the provision dedicating a portion of the meals and beverage tax to the Tourism Fund to support arts, culture, and tourism programs across Connecticut. She explained how organizations have supplied world-class arts experiences on small budgets and how many are confined to high costs. The arts are an important economic driver in Connecticut as they bring tourism into cities, provide patrons to area restaurants, keep communities safe, and bring vitality. Ms. Ott urges the committee to pass this legislation, especially due to federal budget cuts.

**Jennifer Parsons, Senior Curator-Florence Griswold Museum:** Ms. Parsons supports this legislation with respect to the need for increased investment in the tourism fund. Museums such as The Florence Griswold support Connecticut's economy. She stated how the museum cannot do their work without the support of CT Humanities and the Connecticut Office of the Arts, which is why she urges the committee to pass this bill, especially in the aftermath of last year’s destabilizing NEH, NEA, and IMLS funding terminations, primarily for the impact on our sector.

**April Paterno, VP of Governance - Development-Connecticut Science Center:** Ms. Paterno supports this legislation, specifically the provision to dedicate a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund. She explains how the science center benefits the students and teachers of Connecticut through exposing them to STEM-related activities, which is why she urges the committee to pass this legislation, especially in the aftermath of last year's federal funding cut, but primarily for the impact of the sector.

**Jason Patlis, President - CEO-The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk-:** Mr. Patlis explained the economic gain that the state has from the Maritime Aquarium and how tourism is an essential contributor to the state's quality of life as it strengthens local businesses, supports jobs, and ensures our communities stay vibrant and competitive, which is why he supports this legislation.

**John Petillo, President-Sacred Heart University:** Mr. Petillo supports this legislation, specifically the provision dedicating a portion of the meals tax revenue to the Tourism Fund. He explained how the university values their long partnership with Connecticut Humanities as it funds and supports humanities-focused research, educational programs, and public initiatives across the state, which in turn support workforce opportunities and the economy through consumerism. This has directly supported the university through their theater, which is why he urges the committee to pass this legislation.

**Kristen Phillips, Board member-Hartford Symphony and TWH:** Ms. Phillips strongly supports this legislation, specifically the provision dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund. The creative sector contributes a large amount of money annually to the state, foster vibrancy, and supplies many jobs, which is why he urges the committee to pass this legislation.

**Diane Ploch, Administrator-Arts - Culture Collaborative:** Ms. Ploch supports this legislation for dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the tourism fund, as she believes there needs to be increased investment in the fund. She highlights the economic and social impact study of the nonprofit arts and culture industry as it generates a substantial amount of money and economic activity. She believes that we should reinvest the tax money back into the arts and culture sector so we can attract more patrons, who will in turn put more money into the state's economy.

**Elizabeth Posey, Managing Director-The Word-:** Ms. Posey believes that dedicating a portion of Connecticut's existing meals tax to the Tourism Fund is a practical solution to support the arts and cultural sector in Connecticut, as it would foster growth and accessibility and allow for the benefit of adults and children. Ms. Posey believes that investing in art and culture boosts the local economy and enhances life quality for all.

**John Proto, Executive Director-The Shore Line Trolley Museum:** Mr. Proto. Supports this legislation, specifically the proposal to dedicate a portion of the meals tax to the Tourism Fund. Mr. Proto highlights how his museum attracts visitors across the country, contributing to the tourism economy of the New Haven region and supporting local restaurants, hotels, and small businesses. He stated how support from organizations like Connecticut Humanities helps cultural institutions leverage additional private and federal investment and strengthen the impact of state support, which is why he supports this legislation.

**Ali Psomas, Executive Director-ASAP:** Ms. Psomas supports this legislation's continued investment in Connecticut's cultural sector through the Tourism Fund. State support through the Connecticut Office of the Arts and Connecticut Humanities helps organizations like his bring professional teaching artists to classrooms regardless of social class or where someone lives. Ms. Psomas also explains how the cultural sector is also a powerful driver of the state's economy and community health, which is why she urges the committee to support this legislation.

**Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader:** supports many parts of the bill including to amend the sales tax rate levied on peer-to-peer car rental services to create parity between them and other vehicle rental services. This will ensure those renting a peer-to-peer vehicle less than 30 days will have the same leasing and rental tax rates as other rental services. He also supports increasing the sales tax exemption for property and services associated with burials or cremations from $2,500 to $10,000. Citing this change would ease some of the financial burden placed on those burying a loved one or associate.

**Brett Raphael , CEO & Artistic Director, Connecticut Ballet**
**Catherine Ramsey, Executive Director, Transcend The Trend Inc.**
**Babz Rawls Ivy, Board Member, Arts Council of Greater New Haven**
**David Rau, Senior Director, Florence Griswold Museum**
**Cynthia Rider, Managing Director of Hartford Stage, Connecticut Flagship Producing Theaters**
**David Roones, President, Wintonbury Historical Society**
**Rachel Roth, Proprietor, Manor House Inn**
**Amanda Roy, CEO, Greater Hartford Arts Council**
**Rorie Litos Rueckert, Board Member, CT Humanities**
**Marcia Santoni, Connecticut Arts Foundation**
**Ruth Saunders, Board Chair, James Merrill House Foundation**
**Lisa Scails, Executive Director, Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut**
**Betty Ann Russ, Secretary, North Stonington Historical Society**
**David Skolnick, Vice President, Mickey Finn Stores**
**Katiana Jarbath Smith, Founder & Artist, SURGE Arts Initiative**
**Ilona Somogyi, Executive Director, Bell & Socket Arts, Inc.**
**Caroline Tanbee Smith, the Alder of War 9, New Haven Board of Alders**
**Maisa L. Tisdale, President and CEO, The Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community**
**Margaret Anne Tockarshewsky, Executive Director, New Haven Musuem**
**Linda Turner, Gardens Coordinator, Florence Griswold Museum**
**Frankie Vagnone, CEO, Stepping Stones Museum for Children**
**Andres Verzosa, Executive Director and Curator, Stanley-Whitman House**
**Wendy Vincent, Executive Director, Cultural Coalition**
**Lew Wallace, President, Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut**
**Carey Mack Weber, Executive Director, Fairfield University Art Museum**
**Whiston, Childrens Librarian, Children's Services Librarian**
**Winnie Wong, Director of Marketing and Communications, Real Art Ways**
**Meri Wick, Board President, Connecticut Lodging Association**
**Frederick Wu, Treasurer, Greenwich Symphony Orchestra**

**Amrys Williams, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Museums**
**LoriAnn Witte Executive Director, Glebe House Museu, & Garden**
**Amy Wynn, Consultant, AW Strategic Consulting LLC**
**Amy Zinsser, Board Members, Samuel Smith Farmstead**
**Brian Boye, Board Member, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council**
**Wendell Livingston, President, Historic Rowayton**
All support the bill, particularly, investment in the Tourism Fund. The portion of Connecticut's existing meals tax to the Tourism Fund, will create a stable, recurring source of support for arts, culture, and tourism programs statewide - benefiting artists, creators, arts nonprofits, cultural organizations, and creative businesses in the state of Connecticut. The Tourism Fund helps ensure diverse communities can participate in and benefit from Connecticut's cultural sector. Tourism Fund is essential to preserving historic and cultural sites that contribute to Connecticut's identity and attract visitors.

**Stephen Ranieri, Controller, Enterprise Mobility in Connecticut:** Supports the bill, particularly, the 9.35% sales tax be assessed to P2P rentals less than 30 days. This will ensure the State maintains equal tax policy for all rental car companies.

**Connecticut Automotive Retailers Association:** supports many parts of the bill, specifically backing the provision that raises the sales price threshold for the higher motor vehicle tax rate, arguing it better reflects current vehicle pricing and reduces the tax burden on consumers purchasing moderately priced vehicles.

**James Turner Director, Pfizer Inc.:** supports the bill, particularly, clarifying the treatment of electricity under CERT129. He highlights that provisions such as the sales tax exemption on electricity for biotechnology businesses are critical to supporting energy-intensive research and development operations. He emphasizes that this policy would help maintain Connecticut's competitiveness in the life sciences industry and support continued economic growth and job creation.

**Wharton, PhD, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo:** supports many parts of the bill, particularly investment in the Tourism Fund. He emphasized that dedicating a portion of the meals tax to the Tourism Fund would provide critical, stable funding for attractions like the zoo that rely on tourism to operate and serve the public. He highlights that this investment supports conservation, education, and economic activity tied to tourism across the state.

**Donald Rogers**
**Susan Scott**
**Sue Stern**
**Samantha Sweig**
**Jim Taillon**
**Barbara Talbot**
**Fiona Vernal**
**Rebecca Wasilewski**
**Bonnie Waterhouse**
**Catherine Cazes-Wiley**
**Olivia Almagro**
**Anonymous**

**Marilyn Mackay**
**Submitted general testimony in support of HB 5443.**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Anonymous 46, Anonymous 46** opposes this bill because they believe it will expand subsidies and increase costs.

**Anonymous 84, Anonymous 84** opposes this bill because they believe we don't need to increase taxes.

**Chris Davis, Vice President of Public Policy, CBIA** shared general opposition to section 1 of the bill.

**Gregg Grippo, Founding Member, Hygienic Art, Inc.** provided testimony in opposition to HB 5443, raising concerns about state funding for arts organizations, particularly citing alleged governance, ethical, and financial issues at Hygienic Art, Inc. He questioned continued state support for such organizations despite these concerns. The testimony further argues that public funds would be better allocated to addressing social issues such as homelessness.

**John Heath, Sr Manager of GR-Turo-:** Mr. Heath is in opposition to certain provisions and explained how Turo is a key supporter of the silver rights movement and believes that this legislation furthers an unfair tax advantage for large corporations while burdening Connecticut residents.

**Katherine Hermes, Publisher and Executive Director—Connecticut Explored Inc.:** Ms. Hermes supports this legislation with respect to the need for increased investment in the Tourism Fund, which supplies strong funding for Connecticut's cultural organizations.

**Brianna January, Director Gov Relations NE-Chamber of Progress-Opposes** Ms. January stated that HB 5443 deepens an uneven playing field instead of leveling it. Rental car companies avoid the front-end sales tax entirely, while individual car owners are the ones who are burdened, and this legislation undoes fair taxation.

**Douglas Kellogg, State Projects Director-Americans for Tax Reform :** Mr. Kellogg stated how the 50% tax increase on car owners in the carsharing marketplace does not account for the sales tax already paid on the purchase of the vehicle, which worsens the existing double taxation effect. Mr. Douglas believes that imposing a new 3% excise tax on these transactions worsens the burden of double taxation, in which they already pay sales tax on the car purchase, in addition to the registration and licensing fees to operate it. He expressed how this will cripple the industry, and people should contain the right to use their assets productively without a penalizing excise tax. HB 5443 would retrain competition and add an undue burden, which is why he urges the committee to not pass this bill.

**Reported by: Allison Kyff** **Date: 4/14/2026**