

The Arts Council

of Greater New Haven

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TESTIMONY FOR APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT February 17, 2010

Good evening. My name is Cynthia Clair. I'm the executive director of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, a regional arts agency that serves 16 towns, over 120 cultural organizations and hundreds of individual artists. I am also president of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide arts advocacy organization.

I believe that Governor Rell's budget recommendation to cut an additional \$6 million the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism and Arts an additional 2 million is a mistake. This agency is a small one, made even smaller with a 38% cut in fiscal FY10. Unfortunately, the arts are too often an easy target, cast aside as unnecessary when budgets are tight. In my view, this is a misguided and thoughtless decision.

I understand that Connecticut's economy is your top priority at this time. You are concerned with job preservation and job creation, as well you should be. Connecticut's arts and cultural organizations, and our independent artists are the core of the Creative Industries, a sector of the economy that must not be overlooked.

According to Americans for the Arts, the creative industries in Connecticut employ over 27,000 people. Connecticut ranks 4th in the 50 states in the percentage of artists in the workforce, according to a recent National Endowment for the Arts report. A 2006 Economic Impact Study conducted by the state's Commission on Culture and Tourism found that the arts generate over \$3.8 billion each year, including \$2.6 billion in personal income.

In a 2008 Wallace Foundation report *Fostering the Creative City*, Carol Coletta, the head of CEOs for Cities makes several important points:

- 1) Cultural districts stimulate urban redevelopment. Research by the Reinvestment Fund substantiates that cultural engagement indicators are important predictors of real estate market improvement.
- 2) Creative cities are key to attracting and retaining workers. Younger people are increasingly choosing the PLACE where they want to live, rather than relocating for a job. They seek distinctiveness, tolerance for differences, and community vitality.
- 3) Creative communities breed creative ideas. In a Knowledge Economy, new ideas are key to a success. Communities with a concentration of creative people and creative businesses are most likely to be innovative.

In the Urban Institute's 2006 report "Cultural Vitality in Communities," the Greater New Haven and Hartford communities ranked among the top 10 metropolitan areas in the number of nonprofit arts organizations, community celebrations and festivals, and arts jobs. The Institute's report clearly points out that the arts contribute significantly to the rich quality of life we enjoy here in Connecticut, and to the state's economy. In New Haven, the arts are a source of great pride in our community and a cornerstone of Market New Haven's marketing strategy to attract visitors to our city. Numerous business leaders including the director of New Haven's Economic Development Corporation, have cited the vibrant arts and cultural scene as a benefit of doing business in our region and an asset in recruiting and retaining employees

But our industry is strained. Many arts organizations faced cuts of 70% in their operating support grants from the state. These cuts compounded by reductions in corporate funding have led to staff layoffs and reduction in programs. Unfortunately, free programs have been the first on the chopping block without the subsidies necessary to sustain them.

Funding for the arts and culture is not a handout; it's an investment. I recognize that you face a tremendously difficult challenge as you address the state's deficit. Do not overlook the importance of the creative sector to the state's economic growth. The state grants providing operational and program support for arts organization is essential to leveraging private dollars. For every dollar given

to arts and cultural organizations, the private sector contributes \$11. I urge you to preserve funding for the arts, to invest in the creative economy.