

# SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

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February 17, 2017

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriation Committee,

On behalf of the board of directors of the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition and our more than 480 partners, I am pleased to submit this testimony in response to the Governor's Proposed Budget, H.B. No. 7027 An At Concerning the State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2019.

The Coalition is of the nine Regional Service Organizations (RSOs) of the Connecticut Office of the Arts to support the Department of Community and Economic Development (DECD). We represent a diverse cross section of Southeastern Connecticut economic sectors including cultural attractions, museums, libraries, historic site organizations, galleries, graphic artists, creative businesses and artistic entrepreneurs. Thirty-eight percent of our 480 partners are nonprofits.

We appreciate and support that the Governor's budget proposal increases funding for the Arts Commission and Statewide Marketing. The recognition of CT's arts and culture assets (and the marketing of them) is a vital element of economic development. We urge you to preserve funding for the total allocation in the budget towards Arts, including the competitive grant program that is identified in the State's annual budget as ARTS COMMISSION, as well as for the other Arts Lines, so long as the total is preserved. The total of these allocations is what is important.

We also urge you to change the way allocations are made from the Connecticut Arts Endowment Fund. The Arts Endowment provides each qualified cultural organization meeting the criteria with some level of operating funding each year from the interest this fund generates. This is an important, although small, source of operating funds for cultural organizations. Proposed legislation to change the way the funds are allocated and in alignment with how standard endowments are managed, will better utilize the endowment for its intended purpose, while ensuring that the fund remains robust from year to year, *at no cost to the State*.

Arts, culture and creativity are essential to communities' economic growth, cultural vibrancy and sustainability, as well as, being at the table of most revitalization and community development plans and activities. Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations impact our communities beyond their own walls through:

- Education- Students involved in arts programs are 3 x more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, high attendance, and participation in math or science fair. Students involved in arts programs are 44% less likely

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to use drugs. Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations provide in-school, after-school, and summer enrichment programs.

- Tourism- Primary attractions featured by the CT Office of Tourism are nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. Southeastern CT's nonprofit arts and cultural attractions alone attract nearly 1.8 visitors annually.
- Qualities of Life- Cities with a higher concentration of the arts demonstrate higher civic involvement, higher child welfare, more social cohesion, and lower crime and poverty rates.
- Skilled Workforce- Communities with thriving arts and cultural assets attract and retain economic investment, new businesses, and skilled workers.

The economic impact of the arts, culture, heritage and tourism sectors are unquestionable. The State's last Arts & Economic Prosperity study convincingly illustrated that investing State dollars in the nonprofit arts and cultural industry **pays back more than five and a half times in State revenues** what the State provides in funding to the Arts.

The CT Arts & Economic Prosperity Study specifically found that Connecticut's nonprofit arts and culture industry annually generates \$653 million in total economic activity, supports 18,314 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$462.5 million in local household income to residents, and delivers \$59.1 million in local and state government.

Certainly, we recognize current fiscal challenges facing the State and the need to make difficult decisions. FY16 arts funding was .03% (3/100ths of 1%) of the entire State budget. The current proposed funding for the arts reduces the funding further, so we prevail upon you to preserve the total allocation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wendy Bury

Executive Director