

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

February 15, 2017

Members of the Joint Committee on Government Administration and Elections,

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 *Proposed S.B. 373 An Act Eliminating The Requirement For the Purchase Of Artwork For State Building Projects*.

The Cultural Coalition represents a diverse cross section of Southeastern Connecticut's creative economy, including cultural attractions, museums, libraries, historical societies and sites, galleries, graphic artists, creative businesses and individual artists. Our organization is one of the nine Regional Service Organizations of the Office of the Arts to support the Department of Economic and Community Development.

We strongly urge that this bill not be passed. Twenty-eight states have a percent for art program and, according to Americans for the Arts, there are approximately 350 public art programs with their largest source of revenue from dedicated bond revenues.

Percent for Art programs, including Connecticut's, are responsible for integrating art in public spaces in both large and small cities and towns. According to the Connecticut Office of the Arts, "Nearly 400 works have been commissioned since the program's inception. The works represent a wide variety of media, including sculpture, wall relief, environmental installation, painting, and photography; and range in scale from works on paper to monumental murals." In Southeastern Connecticut, the Art in Public Spaces program has benefitted New London and Groton and provided jobs to local artists, fabricators, and creative businesses.

Eliminating the requirement that the State Bond Commission allocate one percent of the state building project cost for the purchase of artwork would essentially defund a valuable program that contributes to the identity and character of communities through public art. Passage of this bill would also eliminate funding for the conservation of existing public art commissioned through the program and the Connecticut Artist Collection.

According to Americans for the Arts, one of the nation's leading arts organizations, "Public art and a vibrant cultural community beautifies and animates cities, provides employment, attracts residents and tourists, complements adjacent businesses, enhances property values, expands the tax base, attracts well-educated employees, and contributes to a creative and innovative environment."

Further, the positive impact of art in public spaces is significant. For example, "Research sponsored by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development demonstrates that arts programs in public housing areas increase neighborhood pride, decrease vandalism, provide safe havens, improve inter-generational communications, and increase tolerance between different cultures and ethnicities." Public spaces and environments are transformed through public art.

The Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition urges you not to pass S.B. 373.

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wendy Bury

Executive Director