May 1, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont
Office of the Governor, State Capitol
210 Capitol Ave
Hartford, Ct 06106

Commissioner David Lehman
Department of Economic and Community Development
450 Columbus Blvd, Suite #5
Hartford, CT 06103

Dear Governor Lamont, Commissioner Lehman,

We are writing to you on a bipartisan basis on behalf of the Eastern Connecticut delegation to request that you include representation from the Arts, Culture, and Tourism sector on your Reopen CT panel and commit to supporting these industries going forward.

We all know that COVID 19 has taken a terrible toll on the State of Connecticut. As of April 28, there have been 26,312 confirmed cases of COVID 19 and 2089 deaths. More than 400,000 residents have filed claims for unemployment. Schools and colleges are closed, health care workers are working long hours to care for the sick, and lives have been upended, in some cases forever.

As the state develops a plan to reopen our economy and to restore some new version of normality, it's vital that the Arts, Culture and Tourism sectors’ unique attributes and enormous contributions to the state’s economy be given the attention they merit.

Arts and Culture represent 5% of CT's economy, generate $9 Billion annually, and support 57,000 jobs; tourism represents 10% of CT's economy, generates $14.7 Billion annually, and supports 122,000 jobs. Arts, Culture and Tourism also comprise one of the hardest hit sectors by COVID-19, as they have virtually no ability to pivot in a meaningful financial way, with closed doors, cancelled events, and zero income. The Hartford Courant listed the Industries performing best and worst during the coronavirus. Based on changes in weekly revenue year over year, the industry hardest hit was transportation with a 90% reduction in revenue. Arts and Culture were second at an 88% reduction and lodging was number three, facing a 78% revenue loss. That is statewide.

Arts, Culture and Tourism have unique factors that complicate their recovery, which includes their mission of live, object or performance-based experiences. They need to maintain facilities with no revenue and are in many cases non-profit organizations with limited resources and fundraising abilities in this environment. The peak season of spring and summer, when the largest percentage of revenue for many of these organizations is generated, is almost upon us with no clear way forward.

The state’s support for these vital industries is needed now more than ever. They supply vital jobs and their very
existence helps create the vibrant communities and superb quality of life for which Connecticut is renowned. From a financial point of view, every dollar invested in tourism returns three dollars to the state. The return is even higher for investments in Arts and Culture, with a 7:1 return ratio.

We agree that ensuring public safety and health is the foundation of any recovery plan. However, for genuine recovery to take place and include all industries, it is paramount that Arts, Culture, and Tourism have not only a voice and a seat at the table as decisions are being made, but support from the state as well.

We hope that you give this request serious consideration. Thank you for your efforts to lead us out of this crisis. We look forward to continuing to find ways to work together.

Sincerely,

Paul M. Formica
State Senator, District 20

Holly Cheeseman
State Representative, District 37

Kathleen McCarty
State Representative, District 38

Heather Somers
State Senator, District 18

Cathy Osten
State Senator, District 19

Norm Needleman
State Senator, District 33

Dan Champagne
State Senator, District 35

Anwar Saud
State Senator, District 3

Kevin Ryan
State Representative, District 139

Mike France
State Representative, District 42

Devin Carney
State Representative, District 23

Joe de la Cruz
State Representative, District 41

Anthony Nolan
State Representative, District 39

Tim Ackert
State Representative, District 8

Jill Barry
State Representative, District 31

Christine Conley
State Representative, District 40

Christopher Davis
State Representative, District 57

Irene Haines
State Representative, District 34

Brian Lanoue
State Representative, District 45

Jesse MacLachan
State Representative, District 35

Brian Smith
State Representative, District 48

Kate Rotella
State Representative, District 43

Michael Winkler
State Representative, District 56
Christine Palm  
State Representative, District 36

Tom Arnone  
State Representative, District 58

Stephen Cassano  
State Senator, District 4