

CULTURAL COALITION

serving southeastern & northeastern CT

P.O. Box 95, New London, CT 06320 | (860) 448-5135 | info@CultureSECT.org | www.CultureSECT.org

DATE: February 22, 2023
TO: Commerce Committee
FROM: Wendy Bury, Executive Director, Cultural Coalition
RE: HB 6692 An Act Authorizing Certain Arts, Culture and Tourism Grants

Dear Co-Chairs Hartley and Meskers, Vice Chairs Rahman and Fazzino; Ranking Members Martin and Harrison, and members of the Commerce Committee,

Unfortunately, I am not able to testify in person or on zoom due to a scheduling conflict.

On behalf of the Cultural Coalition, a nonprofit organization that serves 600 arts, cultural and creative businesses across 42 towns in eastern CT and one of eight Designated Regional Service Organizations for the CT Office of the Arts to support the Department of Economic and Community Development, I am writing to express our support of **HB 6692 An Act Authorizing Certain Arts, Culture and Tourism Grants**.

Public funding ensures the benefits of arts, culture and tourism accrue in every community, including rural areas and small towns, and not just in big cities or big organizations. The benefits are many and primarily: economy, health and well-being, communities and education.

Arts and culture make us stronger—as individuals, families, communities, and as a state. They are a backbone of innovation, prosperity, and thriving people and places. Public funding for arts and culture is a high return investment.

Arts and culture are a CT economic engine. They provide people with the foundation for creativity, equipping an innovative workforce, generating new ideas in every field, and keeping our state competitive. Arts and culture strengthen economic health by creating jobs in multiple industries, driving tourism, and providing opportunities for young people.

Arts and culture improve our health and well-being. They are one of the most effective treatments for trauma, depression and anxiety, including among our nation's veterans. Arts and creativity reduce our susceptibility to stress-related diseases.

Arts, culture and strengthen the fabric of CT's communities. They celebrate local culture—both cherished and new traditions—telling stories of people and places. Arts, culture and creativity promote connection and cohesion, foster the entrepreneurial spirit communities need to thrive, and create the kinds of communities where young people want to build families.

Arts, culture and creativity strengthen education. They set young people up for success, close the achievement gap and improve test scores. And they develop an innovative, competitive workforce by adding the key ingredient of creativity to STEAM education.

The Cultural Coalition serves as the “voice” of the arts and cultural sector and the liaison between the sector and leadership entities invested in regional revitalization, and we provide core services to connect, strengthen, and advocate for the arts and cultural community. From sole proprietors, artists and small volunteer-run organizations, to historical societies and sites and professionally staffed museums, tourist

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attractions and arts centers, the Coalition includes a diverse cross section of nonprofit and for-profit individuals, businesses, groups and organizations.

Pre-pandemic, arts and culture represented 5% of CT's economy, generated \$9 billion annually, and supported 57,000 jobs. CT's nonprofit arts and cultural organizations generated \$800 million annually. Nonprofit arts and cultural economic activity in New London County alone, \$168 million, was greater than each of the following states: Vermont, Delaware and Maine (Arts & Economic Prosperity 5, Southeastern Connecticut, 2015). The small corner of the state packs an enormous economic punch, and represents 1/5 of the CT's total nonprofit arts and cultural economic activity and attracts millions of visitors every year. (Data will be updated for the southeast region and new data for the northeast region is coming in fall 2023.)

Beyond their economic impact, arts and culture are central to the decision-making process for businesses, workers, families, and visitors. Investment in arts, culture and tourism is one of CT's best economic and community development tools. Vibrant communities attract and retain residents, businesses, employees and tourists. Investment in arts, culture and tourism supports workforce development, innovation through cultivation of creative thinking, strong communities, and a major contributor to our quality of life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wendy Bury
Executive Director