

Testimony in Support of

H.B. No. 6692 AN ACT AUTHORIZING CERTAIN ARTS,
CULTURE AND TOURISM GRANTS.

Good morning co-chairs Hartley and Meskers, Vice-chairs
Rahman and Fazzino, Ranking Members Martin and Harrison and
members of the Commerce Committee.

My name is Brett Thompson and I'm the Executive Director of
Connecticut Arts Alliance. We're a statewide network of more
than 100 arts organizations, artists and professionals who work to
bring the benefits of the arts to our state's economy, our
communities and the health and wellbeing of our residents. I also
live in Deep River and am proud to be served by Senator Norm
Needleman.

I join my colleagues at Connecticut Humanities and Connecticut Tourism Coalition in thanking the committee for raising house bill 6692 and opening a needed conversation on the importance of state investments in arts, culture, and tourism.

You heard earlier from Jason Mancini on the Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding Roadmap. This proposal gathered input from more than 200 members of the arts, culture, and tourism communities and was guided by a steering committee that included both tribal nations, Senator Heather Somers and Representative John-Michael Parker, as well as the Connecticut Office of the Arts and Office of Tourism.

The message we heard was loud and clear: if the state is to realize the full economic, community and quality of life benefits of these

sectors, we need a state investment that is meaningful, reliable, and equitable.

A meaningful investment fully supports tourism and cultural organizations in making Connecticut a more attractive place to visit, work, and live. Unfortunately, this has not been the case historically. In 2021, Connecticut invested only \$1.53 per capita in arts and culture, while Rhode Island, New Jersey and New York each invested around \$2.30 and Massachusetts invested \$2.64. This excludes additional investments made in those states at the county and local level. Historical tourism funding tells a similar story of under-investment.

By reliable, we mean that funding levels are relatively consistent over time so that organizations can confidently hire staff and build capacity. Again, this has not been the case historically. Dedicated

funding streams such the hotel and lodging tax, the car rental tax, and revenues from online gaming can provide a greater level of predictability.

And, finally by equitable we mean that state investments are distributed so that arts and cultural organizations -- especially those that have been historically under-resourced -- have equal access to funding opportunities, and so that Connecticut can compete with neighboring states for visitors. A lack of funding over time has led to intense competition between our sectors and created a division between “winners” and “losers.”

We believe that state investments are best administered by trusted public and private partners to ensure accountability. Those include Connecticut Office of the Arts, Connecticut Humanities, and Connecticut Office of Tourism. These organizations are best

positioned to understand the needs of their sectors and can establish metrics and collect data that demonstrate value.

These are the pillars that make up the Funding Roadmap and we look forward working with you to achieve its goals. Together, we can leverage the value of the arts, culture and tourism for our state's economy, our cities and towns, and our residents. Thank you.