

Good Afternoon. My name is Bruce Bouchard and I am the executive director of the Paramount Center for the Arts in downtown Rutland.

I am delighted to testify on behalf of the Vermont Arts Council specifically, but my remarks really could apply to any of the statewide service organizations whose budgets have had the misfortune to appear on this Joint Fiscal Office List. The Paramount Center has hosted the Vermont Symphony Orchestra on many occasions; we have had lecturers presented by the Humanities Council; the programming provided by Vermont PBS serves as a model for the types of arts-centered, low-cost, accessible programming that we stream on our new digital equipment.

I would however, like to focus my remarks in these few minutes on the thing that I believe should matter most to this committee. And that is MONEY.

This is my third trip in six years to testify about the impact of Vermont's cultural organizations. What is troubling is that the conversation isn't really changing. Two sessions ago we were talking about taxing ticket income. Today, I have just come from a hearing in Ways and Means on capping charitable deductions. In my opinion, even if they work, these are solutions designed to metaphorically fill a large sink-hole with TEACUPS OF SAND while overlooking the cubic ton of landfill called ECONOMIC IMPACT and ROI piled directly next to the sink-hole.

Let me cite the value of the Vermont Arts Council to The Paramount Theatre. We have been granted \$90,000 over the past six years; \$60,000 of which were in two important Cultural Facilities grants that, when we were finished leveraging, allowed us to spend \$180,000 to upgrade our facility and add sophisticated digital technology – more about that in just a moment. With the \$30,000 operating funds grants we have received we have doubled our annual budget and tripled our output.

When I came to the Paramount at the very height of the most recent recession, we hosted about 55 events per year. This year we will host 162. Instead of being open an average of one day a week, we are now open once every 2.2 days. And during that same six-year period **23** new businesses have opened bringing **88 new jobs** to the downtown area. In each and every case (I talk to each of these people - they are my neighbors) the revitalized Paramount was a deciding factor in opening in downtown. I had hoped to have testimonials from them to prove it, but Alex only called me two days ago.

We are now considered the economic centerpiece of downtown Rutland's magnificent renaissance. In 2013 one of the cultural facilities grants I referred to earlier allowed us to show LIVE IN HD from the MET, LIVE IN HD from the NAT'L THEATRE, our upcoming 92ND Street "Y" Speaker Series. In addition we have hosted 56 broadcasts of championship games of MLB, NFL, NCAA Basketball, OLYMPICS and the FIFA WORLD CUP....all presented FREE OF CHARGE to the wider community.

In total, 57,000 patrons (11,000 of whom attend free of charge) pass through the doors, eating in restaurants, drinking in pubs, shopping in stores, gassing their cars, staying in hotels and paying their babysitters.....and this project would not have happened without the initial and continuing support of the Vermont Arts Council.

Bottom line, we all care about money. Here's how it flows in my world. Each year the state makes an investment of about \$5,000 in the Paramount through the Vermont Arts Council. The Paramount, in turn, leverages that up to \$450,000 and put on 162 shows. The 57,000 people that see those shows pay taxes on all the food they eat, liquor they drink, and gas they buy. That money goes back to you. Alex Aldrich shared with me that the collective investments in the arts and cultural sector by the state returns nearly \$14.5 million each year to state and local coffers; or about five times what is invested in these five or so agencies by the state..

I'll close without stating what to me is the clear conclusion. I will only add that I have additional testimony from Janet Russell Haines, the chair of Northern Stage in White River Junction. She asked me to elaborate on one additional point. Northern Stage is expanding WRJ's robust creative economy by investing \$7.5 million in a state of the art theater complex in downtown WRJ. For the rest of this year, they will be employing not only the full administrative, technical, and artistic staff to support their season, but 25 additional carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and "finishers." All of those people pay taxes and if you really want to see a spike in State and local tax income from WRJ, just wait until after opening night next fall!

Thank you...