

## **Elvert Eden, Aquatics Manager, LEAP**

Good evening, Chair Furlow and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Elvert Eden, Aquatics Manager at LEAP, and I'm here in support of Lost in New Haven.

I'll keep this focused on impact—what this means for our young people, our families, and our neighborhoods.

Lost in New Haven is more than a museum—it's a cultural hub. It brings together immersive exhibits, interactive experiences, and real artifacts to tell the story of this city—~~from its founding in 1638 to the present day.~~ It creates a space where yesterday, today, and tomorrow all meet on common ground.

At LEAP, we serve over 2,000 young people across six neighborhoods. And what we know is that youth development goes beyond programs—it's about exposure, access, and connection. It's about helping young people understand their identity, their environment, and their place in the world.

Many of our young people walk through New Haven every day without fully knowing the history around them. Lost in New Haven helps close that gap. It turns the city itself into a classroom—one that's interactive, engaging, and culturally relevant.

I was once one of those young people growing up here, trying to find my path. Spaces like this matter because they help young people see themselves as part of something bigger.

What makes this space especially powerful is how it blends everything—local history, U.S. history, pop culture, business, art—all in one place. It's not just about the past; it's about helping people understand that history is still being written and that they're part of it.

I can picture LEAP kids walking over, stepping into that space, seeing familiar names, neighborhoods, and stories—and making real connections. That's not just a visit. That's development in action.

Another key point is access. Located right on Hamilton Street, this isn't just for tourists or downtown visitors—it's placed within reach of local families, schools, and communities. That matters.

Because this is about making sure cultural opportunities aren't limited by zip code.

Lost in New Haven is also built for education. It offers field trips, partnerships, and programming for young people of all ages. That aligns directly with the work we're doing every day at LEAP.

And it's already resonating with people who describe it as a place that brings back memories, sparks curiosity, and creates connections across generations. That kind of response tells you this is something meaningful for the city.

It's also worth noting that this is the first new museum in New Haven in over 40 years. That's not just an addition—it's an investment in how we value our history, our culture, and our communities.

At its core, this is about connection—connection to place, to history, and to opportunity.

If we want young people to feel connected to this city, we must give them spaces where they can see themselves in it.

I encourage you to support Lost in New Haven.

Thank you for your time.