

**Connecticut Historical Society**  
**museum & library**

One Elizabeth Street  
Hartford, Connecticut  
06105-2292

[www.chs.org](http://www.chs.org)

(860) 236-5621

Fax: (860) 236-2664

Dear Co-Chairs Fleischmann and Stillman, and Members of the Education Committee,

As the Executive Director of the Connecticut Historical Society at 1 Elizabeth Street in Hartford, Connecticut, I am writing in support of HB 5355, An Act Concerning Museum Property. This act will provide Connecticut museums, libraries, and archives with an essential means to establish clear title to property in our possession; something that is strongly needed.

Organizations like mine are severely encumbered when donors leave collections without clear title. Our organization was founded in 1825, and there are collections that came to us without clear title from the 1840s onward. We cannot officially accept or reject these collections; therefore, they languish, unused and usually uncataloged, invisible to the public, yet taking up expensive space.

Even in recent decades, potential donors leave collections indicating that they want to be notified if the collection is not accepted into our permanent collection, or leave material on loan, and then prove impossible to reach after a decision has been made not to accept the material. Every effort is made to contact the donor, which is extremely time-consuming if the address, telephone number and email prove to be invalid. Letters are sent to the address left with the material and returned "undeliverable." Internet searches are made scouring for the name, and turn up nothing. So the material – sometimes very bulky – sits, in limbo, using our valuable and limited resources.

An Act Concerning Museum Property (HB 5355) will give libraries, museums, archives, and historic sites in the state – the stewards of our collective history – the mechanism for clearing title to deposits and other items left by donors or lenders and never retrieved. Items and collections without clear title drain limited resources and tie the staff's hands when it would be better to transfer the material to a more appropriate repository or remove it from the collection.

As a public, nonprofit institution charged with collecting our state's history, we take our responsibility to care for materials for the public good very seriously. HB 5355 would enable us to carry out this responsibility effectively and make more collections available to the public.

Sincerely,



Kate Steinway  
Executive Director

