



March 19, 2013

Senator Gary LeBeau, co-chairman  
Representative Chris Perone, co-chairman

**Testimony in support of HB 1131, An Act concerning Changes to the Connecticut Historic Home Tax Credit.**

My name is Helen Higgins and I serve as Executive Director of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, a non-profit state wide preservation assistance organization chartered by the CT General Assembly in 1975. The Trust is a statutory partner of the State Office of Culture and Tourism, DECD.

Community character is what distinguishes each of our 169 cities and towns. Historic buildings are the visible expression of community character in residential neighborhoods and downtown centers. The Historic Homes Tax Credit stimulates investment in smaller historic homes, up to four units of owner-occupied housing. It works.

So, why do we need revisions to our Historic Home Tax Credit? Because the credit needs to be accessible to many more owners of historic houses than it is now, it needs to have a process that is simpler than now exists, and it needs to have more realistic eligible costs numbers so that those with smaller projects and smaller budgets can partake of the credit.

Thirty one states in the country have adopted laws creating credits against state taxes to provide incentives for the appropriate rehabilitation of historic buildings. Many of those credits are for big preservation projects. Connecticut's Historic Homes Tax Credit benefits the owner of a historic home, a completely underserved constituency. At the Connecticut Trust we get countless calls from historic home buyers asking: what financial help/incentives are there for me to restore this historic house we are planning to buy. Since the current Historic Homes credit only applies to certain mainly urban, lower income locations, we have to tell them: nothing. But, we know that even the smallest incentive to a historic homeowner can make the difference between buying and fixing up a house or moving to a new construction house.

Why is this important? Investment in our historic resources, especially in our neighborhoods with historic housing stock reduces pressure to develop open space and farmland. This investment strengthens our communities, retaining more walkable neighborhoods and distinctive places. Buildings not demolished reduces clogging our landfills. Investment in existing historic houses reuses existing infrastructure.

Historic tax credits are not an expense to the state; they provide excellent return on investment – rehabbed buildings add to the local tax rolls, provide jobs and housing. Historic rehab creates more jobs than new construction. These are certified facts demonstrated in multiple studies of historic preservation projects across the country. Historic preservation is an economic driver.

HB 1131 authorizes specific changes to the current tax credit that will stimulate more use of the credit but more importantly will stimulate rehabilitation of our certified historic buildings in urban rural and even older suburban neighborhoods.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.