

Testimony of  
Stephen C. White  
President, Mystic Seaport  
Before the Committee on Commerce  
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Introduced by:  
Sen. Andrew Maynard, 18<sup>th</sup> District  
Rep. Diana Urban, 43<sup>rd</sup> District

Re: Bill No. 714

Senator Lebeau and Representative Perone and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Mystic Seaport, *The Museum of America and the Sea*, regarding **H.B. 714, and act authorizing bonds of the State for Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut.**

**Mystic Seaport Museum:** Our mission is to inspire an enduring connection to the American maritime experience through its collections and interactive programs. Founded in 1929, Mystic Seaport has been a national leader in the museum field and a driving force for tourism and economic development in Connecticut and New England. Internationally recognized for our peerless maritime collections, and celebrated for our exemplary stewardship, the Museum manages over 2,000,000 catalogued objects, including 524 watercraft. Educational programs are provided for students K-12, undergraduates through the Williams College/Mystic Seaport Maritime Studies Semester, and graduate students through the summer Munson Institute. We are supported by a membership of over 16,000 households, and welcome 270,000 visitors to our grounds annually.

**Charles W. Morgan:** We are most proud of our iconic vessel, the *Charles W. Morgan*, a national historic landmark vessel, the sole surviving wooden whaleship in the world, and the oldest commercial vessel afloat in the U.S. In 1941 the *Morgan* came to Mystic Seaport and virtually created the modern tourism industry in our region. In the context of the recreated 19<sup>th</sup> century seaport village, she established herself as the primary draw for the Museum and southern New England. Her national significance is borne out by the fact that more than 20 million visitors have walked across her deck since her arrival in Mystic. And thus, she has enabled Mystic Seaport to be an anchor for State and regional commerce, and for the past several decades, Mystic Seaport has remained one of the top 20 employers in southeastern Connecticut with over 300 employees for much of the year.

Vessels like the *Charles W. Morgan* require regular care and periodic restoration to maintain their structural integrity. The current round of restoration began in 2008, and the scope of the work led us to the conclusion that the *Morgan* could be seaworthy again for the first time in nearly a century. Post restoration, the vision for the *Charles W. Morgan* is for her to leave the static confines of Chubbs Wharf at Mystic Seaport and to go to sea again