

Statement of Michael M. Brenner

Mr. Chairman, members of the Commerce Committee, thank you for the privilege of appearing before you in support of this bill. I am speaking from the perspective of a Connecticut native who has returned to the state after an absence of more than 40 years, as a new resident of East Windsor, and as a volunteer at the Connecticut Trolley Museum.

I have had the privilege of being a member of the museum for about a year. I volunteer in the shop where I help restore or rehabilitate our trolleys and I serve as a Motorman and Conductor on our line.

It is a privilege to repair and operate our trolleys, but it is the role of Conductor that I value the most. It is the Conductor who is responsible for the safety of the trolley and its passengers, but it is the Conductor who tells the story of Connecticut's rich streetcar heritage to our guests.

In my short time as a Conductor, I have had the privilege of sharing that proud story with guests from two European countries, several Canadian provinces, from California, Texas, Louisiana, Colorado, Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota. I have proudly shared with them my pride in Connecticut's streetcar history - that the man who is regarded as the Father of the Trolley, Mr. Frank Sprague, was raised in Milford, my home town - that our museum is the oldest incorporated Streetcar Museum in the United States. I have reminded them of Connecticut's proud history as a manufacturing center when I tell them of the 13 mills that our line had served in Rockville a century ago. And I have

shared that our rich heritage that once included 2,331 streetcars operating on 1113.2 miles of track has been reduced to fewer than 25 cars on about 5 miles of track.

We have much to be proud of, and I love to tell our story. The passengers I have served are grateful for the chance to look back in our history.

But we need help. There is a limit to how much volunteers like me can do to preserve our history and make it come alive for our guests.

Our museum is a treasure - a gem - a diamond in the rough. I hope you will support this bill so our museum, which proudly bears the name of our State, can continue to shine as a destination for folks who love streetcars as much as I do.