



March 2, 2015 Testimony by Katherine D. Kane
To the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee

The Harriet Beecher Stowe
House and Library

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Chairwoman Walker, Chairwoman Bye and members of the Appropriations Committee,
My name is Katherine Kane. I am the Executive Director of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center.

In what was once the richest city in the country, now one of the poorest, the Stowe Center is a museum, library and learning center. I am here to ask you to continue the state's financial support for the Stowe Center – funded with The Mark Twain House & Museum as part of the Arts/Culture funding.

The Stowe Center is a National Historic Landmark in Connecticut's capital city. More than 2/3 of our visitors come from outside the state. The state's minimal investment (\$45,450/year) has exponential impact: out of state tourists bring dollars to restaurants, hotels and retail attractions. On any given day, our doors may open to welcome tourists from Japan, Germany, China, Brazil - or one of the 48 states and 20 countries who visited in 2014.

Who is our audience? In 2014, we saw 41,332 people - a number that is on an upward trajectory, increasing 19% over 2013. CT's support makes this possible.

Harriet Beecher Stowe is a Connecticut icon. Her courageous anti-slavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin was a bellwether event in America's history, catapulting the abolitionist movement into public consciousness and unleashing a groundswell of support for the eradication of slavery.

Our Salons at Stowe – one of our menu of public programs – largely attracting state residents, foster civic engagement and inspire positive action in the tradition of Harriet Beecher Stowe. As a community anchor, the SC is committed to producing engaging experiences that empower people to actively participate in their community and our global society. We are proud that the Salons have been recognized nationally as a model of museum programming.

Students of all ages visiting the SC participate in a wide range of programs, connecting history to today. At a recent such program, students created public service announcements to raise awareness about bullying, trash pickup, recycling and personal violence. Museums are important partners with schools - we nurture the power of the humanities to nurture curious minds. Our collections are world class – and are used by many – from students crafting History Day projects to Pulitzer Prize winning scholars.

As a 21st century museum and program center, The Stowe Center connects issues addressed by Stowe to the contemporary face of those issues. If Connecticut is to succeed in addressing racism, slavery and human trafficking, economic justice and education equity, we need a place at the table for cultural heritage museums like the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center.

Her words changed the world.

