

Testimony of Robert Burns, Executive Director  
Mattatuck Historical Society d/b/a Mattatuck Museum  
March 2, 2015  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee

**RE: H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**

Members of the committee, I am writing in my capacity as director of the Mattatuck Historical Society located in Waterbury. I would like to offer the following comments on H.B. 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017 and Making Appropriations Therefor and Other Provisions Related to Revenue. Specifically, The Governor's budget proposal that eliminates all funding for Connecticut Humanities. The budget proposal would also repeal the legislation that created the Connecticut Humanities Fund, which is contained in the governor's budget implementation bill for the state Department of Education (Section 36 of Senate Bill No. 942).

Currently, Connecticut Humanities funding falls under the Connecticut State Library, which is part of the state Department of Education budget. These funds amount to about two-thirds of their budget and the loss would be devastating to the heritage and cultural organizations statewide that are served by their programs.

Connecticut's great strength is its rich cultural history. In fact, the States multi-million dollar tourism campaign *Still Revolutionary* revolves around bringing attention to the many heritage and cultural organizations that dot the State. Although significant in quantity and quality, the majority of our history organizations operate on shoe-string budgets with the generous support of community volunteers. Most have extremely small staff, many part time, who work diligently to present our States history in the best possible light with a modicum of funds.

This money targeted by this budget cut are the Connecticut Humanities funds which are re-granted to Connecticut's cultural institutions. Should this pool cease to exist the impact would

be devastating for hundreds of nonprofit organizations across Connecticut engaged with history and the humanities.

Specifically for the Mattatuck Museum, Connecticut Humanities Grant funds have enabled us to expand our exhibition offerings and increase our marketing budget -- providing increased exposure to museum exhibitions and programs across the State into New York and New England.

The 2014 *Connecticut at Work* program, organized and partially funded by CT Humanities is just one example of how these funds were leveraged to increase support from outside funders and to foster partnerships between Connecticut's heritage and cultural institutions. The Smithsonian-organized panel exhibit was offered to several locations across the state and each venue was encouraged to gather other local heritage and culture partners to enhance the exhibition through showcasing local stories.

The Mattatuck Museum developed two companion exhibits of artwork by Connecticut artists, and developed a series of programs – film screenings, book discussions, lectures, theatrical performances, a writing project and a week-long teen internship program – in collaboration with our partners UConn/Waterbury Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI); Timexpo: The Timex Museum; Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC); Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury; New Opportunities, Inc.; Literacy Volunteers of Greater Waterbury, the Silas Bronson Library; Waterbury Public Schools; the City of Waterbury and Shakesperience, Inc. Without the funds of Connecticut Humanities partnerships would not be possible.

We fully understand that these are very difficult financial times for the state. But the benefits to our state through funding Connecticut Humanities is worthy of the effort to identify other ways to balance the budget.

I respectfully ask that you maintain state funding for Connecticut Humanities at current levels. Thank you for the opportunity to address this request with you on this important issue.