



**Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum**  
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TESTIMONY ON PROPOSED BILL H.B. 5983: AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE  
FOR THE WEBB-DEANE-STEVENS MUSEUM IN THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD  
TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR THEIR EXPANSION PROJECT

Presented to the Commerce Committee at their Public Hearing held on  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2015 AT 10:30 AM

I am Charles Lyle, Executive Director of the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Old Wethersfield. I am here on behalf of the Museum to request your assistance in attaining State bonds to support the construction of our new Education Center with an accompanying changing exhibition gallery.

The total cost of the new building project is estimated at 5.4 million dollars (3.4 million for construction and 2 million to be put towards the endowment needed to support the new addition). We currently have two million dollars in restricted funds in hand from an earlier Capital Campaign and plan to reserve it for the Endowment portion. To assist with the construction of the new facility, we have started a new campaign to raise an additional 1.7 million dollars in restricted donations for the Building Fund. We are requesting that the State match our private fund raising efforts by approving bonding in the amount of 1.7 million dollars for the building project at the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum.

The proposed new Education Center will enable the Museum to expand its programs and staff in order to become a vital regional resource for Connecticut's history and culture in the heart of the Old Wethersfield Historic District. Our long range plan calls for increasing educational outreach and our goal is to double the number of school groups of all ages that visit the Museum annually. Furthermore, we wish to increase the number of tourists who visit the site. The proposed 8,285 square-foot facility will replace outmoded structures annexed to the Webb House and is designed in a vernacular architectural style that compliments the adjacent historical structures. It will provide space for changing exhibits, expanded meeting and event space (allowing us to hold programs during the winter months when the Museum is now closed to the public due to the lack of facilities and heat), more educational programs for schools, and a state-of-the-art library and research center. In addition, there will be space for staff offices and museum and archival storage. The campaign brochure further details the need for the new addition and provides the architects' exterior and interior schematic drawings and floor plans for the new facility.

Between 2003 and 2008, the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Connecticut mounted a Capital Campaign mainly within its own membership and raised \$1.9 million dollars for this project and for needed repairs and restoration of our three historic houses and out buildings. Due to the drastic downturn of the U.S. economy in 2008, the campaign for the new building had to be put on hold. However, we were able to shift our priorities and address much needed deferred maintenance and restoration projects at the three historic houses and out buildings. With a grant of \$150,000 from the Save American Treasures Fund and matching grants totaling \$171,513 from the Connecticut Historic Restoration Fund, over \$500,000 in restoration work has been completed within the past seven years to put our buildings in top condition. Private funds totaling \$263,544 were taken from the Capital Campaign Fund to match these grants. Thanks to market appreciation and new gifts, the current Capital Campaign Fund stands at approximately 2 million dollars.

The key to the success of the Capital Campaign is to secure matching State support. We do not have the capacity to raise 3.4 million dollars on our own, though we believe that we can raise an additional 1.7 million dollars in private donations. The NSCDA-CT hired a development director last year and launched the first phase of a new campaign in October 2014 to raise funds restricted for the construction of the new building. So far nearly \$500,000 in new gifts and pledges has been contributed by the Board of Managers and their state-wide membership. A matching grant from the State will provide the positive momentum needed to successfully launch a broader public appeal and to approach foundations and other prospective donors later this year with the goal of raising an additional 1.2 million dollars. Without State funding, it is unlikely that we will be able to raise the total amount required to complete this important project.

If the project receives state funding in the full amount requested, we believe that we can break ground for the new building as early as this summer. The assurance of state funding and having the construction in progress will help to generate interest and to attract additional contributions for the project.