



**RAILROAD MUSEUM OF NEW ENGLAND SUPPORTS
H.B. 5003 "AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR
THE RAILROAD MUSEUM OF NEW ENGLAND IN THOMASTON"**

Good Morning, Senator Hartley, Representative Perone, and members of the Commerce Committee. Thank you for allowing this bill to be given a hearing. I also want to thank John Piscopo for sponsoring this bill.

My name is Steve Casey and I am a volunteer board member of the Railroad Museum of New England (RMNE), located in Thomaston. On behalf of the board, I wish to express support for H.B. 5003 'AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR THE RAILROAD MUSEUM OF NEW ENGLAND IN THOMASTON', to provide funding to the Railroad Museum of New England in the town of Thomaston for construction and renovations to the facility.

With funds provided by the state, the RMNE could complete the restoration of the beautiful historic landmark Thomaston Train Station built in 1881. This work would include repointing the brick exterior on the east and west sides of the station, re-building the platform next to the station, performing much-needed site work to re-grade the station area to provide proper drainage, and restoring and installing additional tracks at the station as it was 125 years ago. The additional track would allow us to consolidate our collection and display restored antique railroad cars.

The building has an interesting history. It nearly burned to the ground in the early 1990s but was saved by the local Volunteer Fire Department whose members just happened to be training nearby. Soon after, the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation rebuilt the roof, saving the integrity of the remaining building. Over the years, a combination of state and community grants and dedicated volunteers have made slow but steady progress restoring the Thomaston Station.

The RMNE is open to the public at this site. Our group is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation and an all volunteer, educational and historical organization that dates back to January 1968. The mission of the RMNE is to tell the story of the region's rich railroad and industrial heritage through our educational exhibits and operation of the Naugatuck Railroad. The museum is a story of the industrial heritage of our region and the development of society around the railroad.

We offer excursion train rides along the scenic Naugatuck River on restored antique 1920s passenger coaches. The Museum attracts tourists from all over the United States and beyond who are interested in trains and the heritage of the industrial revolution. The Town of Thomaston itself was built around the clock factory of Seth Thomas and the Plume & Atwood Brass Mill. For 125 years, brass made in factories in Waterbury was shipped on the Naugatuck Railroad to Thomaston and the Seth Thomas Company. The workers then manufactured clocks that were shipped out of Thomaston Train Station to customers all over the world.

Railroad stations were the center of the community 125 years ago. We plan to make the Thomaston Station a showplace for the community again.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

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