

Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly, February 16, 2016

Senator Beth Bye and Representative Toni Walker, Co-Chairs

Subject: House Bill 5044, specifically funding for the Connecticut Humanities Council Inc. within the budget of the Connecticut State Library

Testimony submitted by Gregg Mangan, Ph.D., Manager of Digital Humanities, Connecticut Humanities Council Inc., Middletown, Conn.

Good evening, Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Gregg Mangan and I am the manager of digital humanities at the Connecticut Humanities Council, the state's nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

There are a number of important projects and programs at Connecticut Humanities that allow Connecticut residents to make more meaningful connections to their past and foster a greater appreciation for their state. These programs exist largely because of sustained state support.

Among the most substantial projects potentially threatened by adjustments to this year's state budget is *ConnecticutHistory.org*—Connecticut's award-winning online resource for learning about our state's rich and engaging history. *ConnecticutHistory.org* currently contains approximately 1,500 concisely written topical essays covering all 169 towns in Connecticut, as well as links that allow readers access to primary source collections housed at libraries, archives, and heritage organizations throughout the state.

It is a resource that in just over three years of existence has seen the number of visits to its site grow from 88,000 to over one million annually. These visits are not just from Connecticut but come to us from all over the country. Thousands of people and institutions interested in learning more about our state access *ConnecticutHistory.org*'s content on a daily basis. Several have even established permanent links to our content as a resource for their own users. A small sample of these institutions include:

- The United States Census Bureau
- The Smithsonian Institute
- The New York Times
- West Virginia University
- The New England Historical Society
- Connecticut Regional Schools

Connecticut Humanities is not only constantly developing new content for *ConnecticutHistory.org*, but additionally, we are always looking for ways to make this content more useful to residents of our state. This goal led to the creation of another Connecticut Humanities project called *Teach It*.

Teach It is an online resource that allows educators to incorporate Connecticut history into the classroom through the use of inquiry-based activities that reinforce the learning principles promoted in the Connecticut State Social Studies Frameworks. This is a crowd-sourced site that uses the expertise of educators and heritage organizations across the state to provide intuitive and adaptable resources teachers can incorporate into already existing lesson plans.

Connecticut Humanities is also a major funder for Connecticut History Day. This is a program for students in grades six through twelve that encourages the exploration of local, state, national, and world history. Students select a historical topic that relates to an annual theme and then conduct extensive research using libraries, archives, museums, and oral history interviews. They then analyze and interpret their findings, draw conclusions about their topic's significance in history, and create final projects that demonstrate their work. These projects can be entered into a series of competitions, from the local to the national level, where professional historians and educators evaluate them.

For the survival of these resources and more, I ask that you please maintain the state's long-term investment in Connecticut Humanities. Thank you.