Date: February 27, 2019

To: Appropriations Co-Chairs and Committee
   Co-Chair, Senator Catherine Osten
   Co-Chair, Representative Toni Walker

Dear Members of the Committee;

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to submit testimony related to the continued preservation and re-envisioning of the HISTORIC BARNUM MUSEUM. My name is Kathleen Maher and I am the Executive Director of the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport.

The Barnum Museum has served millions of learners from Connecticut and the world-over since its opening in 1893, celebrating over 125 years of service. The Barnum is one of the State’s most iconic destinations for Connecticut citizens as well as regional and global travelers. The Barnum is a vibrant place of learning and engagement, stimulating community investment, and supporting higher education and economic development.

In 2010, the Barnum Museum suffered catastrophic damage from an EF1 tornado that ravaged downtown Bridgeport, and additional destruction from both Hurricane Irene and Super Storm Sandy. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the CT Trust for Historic Preservation and CT Humanities were immediate responders to the devastating aftermath of these horrific storms. With their support, the Barnum Museum leveraged dollar-for-dollar the state investment, enabling the Museum to initiate the major historic restoration of the nationally significant historic site.

With bonding support from CT DECD in 2016 and 2018, the Museum has successfully commenced the full revitalization of the site. State support helped fund a Market and Financial Analysis and an Economic Impact Study. Results from these critical reports reveal the Museum’s revitalization will generate $24,100,000 into the regional economy spurring jobs, construction, hotel and sales tax revenue, corridor tourism and visitor spending. Over 170,000 guests are anticipated to visit Downtown Bridgeport every year contributing to the urban renaissance of the historic city center.

WE NEED TO CONTINUE THE STATE PARTNERSHIP AND YOUR INVESTMENT WILL ENABLE THE BARNUM MUSEUM TO LEVERAGE ADDITIONAL DOLLARS THAT WILL HELP RE-OPEN A SAFE AND VIBRANT MUSEUM FOR ALL CITIZENS.

The Barnum Museum, a prominent nationally significant historic site in the heart of Bridgeport’s downtown, is at the crossroads of arts, heritage, business and technology; it is a beacon for innovative thinking designed to leverage community resources to advance a robust cultural entertainment center.
The Museum collaborates with local and regional cultural partners to strengthen Bridgeport’s tourism district which creates a positive economic impact and improves local quality of life.

- Collaborations and partnerships with local and regional universities to expand technology, engineering and humanities programs to position students and life-long learners for emerging innovation and entrepreneurial **job opportunities**.
- Collaborations with local and regional schools and educational institutions to develop and advance community-based learning as part of the **cradle to career continuum in Bridgeport**.
- Collaborations with local and regional restaurants, hotels, and attractions to create new, vibrant **tourism destination opportunities** for local and I95 corridor traffic.
- Barnum Museum re-envisioning is an engine of innovation that represents the ideals, needs and principals of 21st century citizens.

Although we continue to push forward to raise capital dollars to save Connecticut’s nationally significant landmark, we face a critical juncture where every minute counts to prevent disastrous failure of the structure and the loss of a National Register of Historic Places site.

State funding for the Barnum Museum is an investment in the future, an investment that will yield economic activity and inspire new growth and revitalization for Connecticut’s largest city.

I humbly ask the Members to fully support continued funding and ensure the existence of the historic Barnum Museum for all Connecticut citizens.

Most sincerely,

**Kathleen Maher**

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*“The Noblest Art Is That Of Making Others Happy”*

P.T. Barnum, 1886