

March 3, 2021

Re: Appropriations Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Elementary and Secondary Education Agencies

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the Governor's proposed budget cuts to the State Library. Specifically, the cuts impact borrowIT CT, the program that allows Connecticut residents to use their hometown library card to request books from any participating library and return books to any library. I personally relied on this program during the pandemic when I needed books to homeschool my kids and keep doing my job from home as much as possible. Thanks to borrowIT and curbside pickup, I could still get all the resources we needed even when my hometown library had to close to the public due to COVID-19. As a result, my first grader who missed the last three months of kindergarten was not behind at all when he started first grade; he was right where he would have been with his skills and development had there been no interruption. He had previously had some struggles with early literacy, and we were so relieved and grateful that he was prepared for first grade and is having a great year.

Even in non-pandemic years, borrowIT has been a key part of providing equitable opportunities for Connecticut residents. Town libraries vary widely in size, collection, and funding, so depending on where you live you might have access to a robust collection with all the resources you need, or you might not. Through borrowIT, that barrier is removed. It's truly a progressive, invaluable program. Worst of all, the \$100K cut will trigger an additional \$100K cut in matching federal funding, for a total loss \$200,000.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Briggs