

To: The Honorable State Representatives and State Senators of the Appropriations Subcommittee for Elementary and Secondary Education

RE: HB-6439

From: Melissa Canham-Clyne, Library Director, Hamden Public Library

Dear Honorable Representatives and Senators,

My name is Melissa Canham-Clyne. I am a resident of New Haven and currently serve as the Library Director for the Hamden Public Library. I am submitting testimony in opposition to Governor Lamont's proposed cuts to the State Library.

In my fifteen years as a public librarian, I have worked in every type of public library – urban, rural, suburban - each one governed a tad differently and most certainly funded in distinct ways. Most people do not realize that there are 191 public libraries in a state with 169 towns. Some of these libraries are municipal departments and others are private nonprofits providing a public good. New Haven Free Public Library and Hamden Public Library are examples of a municipal library and the Clark Memorial Library in Bethany is an example of a nonprofit association library.

These libraries uniquely serve their communities **AND** each of these libraries are fully available to serve any of the 1.4 million plus library card holding residents of Connecticut through BorrowIT, the state's reciprocal borrowing program. Think about how amazing this is – a 191 varied libraries can maintain their autonomy at the same time as ensuring that their doors and collections are open to anyone! This miracle, an example of true resource sharing, creates a more equitable state and a higher quality of life for every learner in the state. It takes a well-organized, forward thinking institution to provide not only the infrastructure to make this feat possible but also to help each one of these libraries become the community anchors their residents need.

Governor Lamont's proposed budget destroys this miracle because it will cripple the ability of the State Library to support the services that connect libraries and help all residents. His cuts to the State Library on paper are \$200,000, with half of that coming from BorrowIT alone. In the real world of money though, the Governor's cuts are magnified because Connecticut receives money from the federal government through the Institute of Museums and Libraries. The Governor's slashing would trigger the Federal Maintenance of Effort statute and the state library would lose \$97,000 in federal funding. State Library services and programs, such as BorrowIt – remember his proposal already reduces that by 15%, will shrink in capacity to produce any kind of savings. Such shrinkage in Hartford means that any progress in encouraging borderless resource sharing, which naturally grows equity and quality of life in Connecticut, is damaged.

**Damaged.** This past year the SARS-COVID 19 pandemic proved the extreme importance of the services of the State Library. Again, because there is diversity in how libraries are governed, libraries provided services as best as possible given the dictates of their municipalities or their boards. Residents throughout Connecticut still knew that even if their local library was not able to lend a physical item to them, they were able to borrow that book or DVD from another town's library. Public libraries are second responders in crisis and the seamless functioning of borrowIT and other state library programs meant that all residents were helped. Governor Lamont's reductions to the State Library's budget hampers libraries' ability to serve as second responders.

Governor Lamont's budget hurts another important institution to Connecticut libraries, the Connecticut Library Consortium/CLC. The role of the CLC in each CT residents' life is cost savings and the professionalization of library services. As a consortium it enables libraries to leverage their spending power and save money on everything from bestsellers to early literacy computer stations to PPE. In the last twelve years, the state's contribution to the CLC has diminished by 62%. Governor Lamont's flatlining of this organization means that its ability to serve libraries again inflicts suffering on residents. Libraries will have their mutual power to save residents money curtailed, meaning libraries will spend more to provide their patrons with less.

As a society we cannot completely comprehend the impact this pandemic will have on life-long learning. As a library director, though, I know that as Connecticut emerges from this emergency, our residents will need every resource available to remedy engendered losses. These residents deserve robust and tested institutions to help provide resources in an equitable manner. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to support the efforts of our State Library and to oppose the Governor's cuts.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
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