

To: Appropriations Committee

From: Beth Dominianni, Director, Mark Twain Library, Redding, CT

I write regarding HB 6439 because the ability of the State Library to meet its mission is in jeopardy. After more than a decade of cuts, any cut to the State library budget is now also a cut to Federal dollars. The proposed cuts totaling \$200,000 will lead to an additional \$97,000 cut in Federal IMLS funds. A \$297,000 cut will damage vital programs and services of the State Library. The Connecticut State Library receives Federal money from the Institute of Museum & Library Services. The Governor's proposed cuts to the State Library would trigger the Federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) statute and stands to lose \$97,000 in Federal funds for Connecticut. This additional cut would force the State Library to find additional savings, further eroding the State Library's ability to meet the citizens of CT needs.

Furthermore the proposed cut to borrowIT CT (formerly C-CARD) Governor Lamont' budget plans cuts this Connecticut State Library budget line 15% or by \$100,000 cut. The borrowIT CT program, created in 1976, is enormously popular and enables ALL Connecticut residents to freely borrow materials from other libraries at no extra cost. For a small town library like mine, this is vital to providing service. Patrons of the Redding public library (Mark Twain Library) borrow thousands of items from other libraries each year. But of even greater impact is the ability for Danbury and other area town residents to use our collections. Libraries received guidance on opening safely from the State along with a strict set of sector guidelines. Like so many libraries, Mark Twain Library in Redding pivoted immediately, continuing to provide service in safe ways. Libraries were there for their communities, those that could open did and those that couldn't knew their neighboring libraries had their backs. For example, when their libraries were still closed, a Danbury family of 5 children used our library resources to home school their children because we could loan them material under borrowIT and a Bethel couple was able to use our public computers for vital emails. When high local COVID numbers forced us to temporarily close our doors to visitors due our small footprint, neighboring Ridgefield was able to accommodate our patrons. All through the past year, borrowIT has been more than nice, it has been essential.

Many states have only county system of library loaning between towns, borrowIT is a program that our state should take extreme pride in fully funding. This program supports equity and regionalization and saves money for communities. At an estimated value of \$52,000,000 for the borrowed materials and a cost of \$700,000, borrowIT CT has tremendous return on investment. The program has long been underfunded, now

providing only \$0.20 per item loaned, although the estimated cost to libraries to lend is \$1.05 per item. Once funded at over \$1 million, the program has been whittled to 57% of the 2008 appropriation. Reducing funding decreases incentives for towns to participate, leading communities to pull up drawbridges to non-residents.

Furthermore, by supporting the State Library, you also support the Connecticut Cooperating Library Service Unit known as CLC which receives some of its funding as a line item in the State Library budget. CLC has lost 65% of its state funding over the past 12 years. Every cut to state funding (both this year and historically) decreases the ability of Connecticut libraries to provide resources to their community and to save staff and municipal resources via CLC's cooperative programs and publicly bid contracts. Mark Twain Library saves 40% on every book ordered through the CLC book vendor contracts negotiated by CLC and takes advantage of negotiated reductions for purchasing library supplies and furnishings.

Thank you for your consideration.