

Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee  
Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee  
Public Hearing Testimony STATE LIBRARY BUDGET

March 9, 2021

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Mary Etter and I serve as Chair of the CT State Library Board. I am writing on the Board's behalf in support of full funding of the CT State Library Budget, without cuts proposed in HB 6439, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Our new State Librarian, Deborah Schander, outlined the impact of the proposed cuts during her agency presentation earlier in the day. The Board wishes to emphasize the serious effect the proposed cuts would have on the State Library's ability to carry out its important mandates in serving our State's citizens.

HB 6439 proposes a \$100,000 cut from the State Library's "Connecticard" program, now known as borrowIT CT. Initiated 45 years ago by legislated mandate, this is the State's "reciprocal borrowing" program, which allows residents of any town to visit and check out materials from any other town's public library. Its companion program, deliverIT CT (once known as "Connecticar"), returns materials to the owning library. This supports a simple concept: treat all the citizens of a small State as one "region," allowing equity of access to resources to all. A student unable to find needed information in his or her own library can choose to study in a much larger library with a more robust collection nearby. The lending library receives a small financial incentive for sharing the collection: less than 20% of the actual cost. In many libraries, this funding provides the key incentive that assures continuous participation in the program.

The proposed cut may seem modest, but the cumulative budget reductions of previous years magnify the effect this year. A \$100,000 cut will trip the "maintenance of effort" requirement attached to Federal funding that supports deliverIT CT and many other State Library programs, including the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH). LBPH serves over 5,500 active patrons now, with growth in the number served anticipated as Federal guidelines expand to include students with disabilities that may be best served with materials once thought to help only people with vision challenges. These specialized services would be reduced by both the loss of State and Federal dollars.

Annualizing the FY2021 rescission of \$53,749 further erodes the State Library's ability to maintain its own collections and services, critical activities that address the mission of the State's chief law library and caretaker of the State's history and public records. A law library cannot ethically provide outdated information; the official records of the State become inaccessible if not properly cataloged and maintained.

The State Library Board joins the Connecticut library community in alerting your committee to the serious and wide-ranging effects of the reductions proposed in HB 6439. We strongly urge you to restore these funds and allow the State Library to continue to serve all of our citizens responsibly.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary J. Etter

Chair, CT State Library Board