

Submission of Written Testimony re: HB-6439

Rachel Gravel, Head of Borrowing & Technical Services, Simsbury Public Library

Distinguished Connecticut Legislators,

I write as a public librarian in the State of Connecticut. In my role at Simsbury Public Library (SPL), it is my responsibility to collect statistics each month for borrowIT reporting and to serve patrons at our public service desks, so I know first-hand how this program enriches Connecticut residents.

During the 2019-2020 borrowIT year, SPL served an average of about 7,300 non-residents each month. We've continued to serve thousands of residents from the Farmington Valley and beyond during the pandemic, especially as we continue to offer expanding open hours while some of our neighboring towns remain closed to the public or open for limited hours. Each day the library staff at Simsbury provides materials, programs and services to dozens of regular patrons from Granby, Avon, Canton, Bloomfield, Hartland and Winsted, for instance. Indeed, the number of non-resident patrons served each month has increased fourfold since we re-opened to the public in September.

The borrowIT program creates a net around CT libraries and recognizes the interconnectedness of *all* libraries in providing *all* state residents essential social services. Like many libraries in the State during this pandemic, whether our doors have been open or closed to the public, Simsbury has continued to provide materials to children learning to read and lonely seniors in the region with curbside services and to deliver engaging and informative virtual programming to all patrons regardless of where they live. We do not deny non-residents the services funded by Simsbury taxpayers, because the State supports its residents' ability to utilize the valuable resources of any library in CT and sought to sustain this mission with the borrowIT program. Though the State has cut funding for libraries in the last decade, now more than ever, when patrons in our region most need the free reading materials, internet access, job-hunting help, resume assistance and financial-planning information that Simsbury Public Library and its Business & Career Center provides, it is essential to maintain or increase funding for this important program that supports our operating budget.

Sharing resources is what allows libraries to thrive and to in turn sustainably provide what communities need, and community goes beyond the geographical boundaries of CT towns and cities. The Connecticut State Library envisions a future of broad resource sharing to maximize what libraries can offer citizens as our communities grow and change, and that can only be accomplished with the Legislature's and Governor's support.

Sincerely,

Rachel Gravel

Head of Borrowing & Technical Services, Simsbury Public Library