

Written Testimony for Public Hearing State Library Budget FY 22 and FY23  
HB-6439 – Connecticut State Library Budget  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Subcommittee for Elementary and Secondary Education  
Jennifer Keohane - March 8, 2021

Honorable Appropriations Subcommittee members,

I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC), based in Middletown and a resident of Wallingford. I'm writing today in opposition of the Governor's Proposed Budget FY22 and FY23 regarding funding to the Connecticut State Library.

**Cuts to the Connecticut State Library do not equal savings for the people of Connecticut.** Now, more than ever, it is not the time to cut funding to the State Library and Connecticut's libraries.

I respectfully ask the committee for the following:

- **Restore borrowIT (formerly Connecticard) funding.**

The Governor's Budget proposes cutting \$100,000 (15%) from the borrowIT (formerly Connecticard) program. This may not look significant on paper, but these cuts not only trigger an additional cut of \$97K in federal funding because the State Library will not meet the Federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) statute.

The larger impact of the \$100K cut is the impact on an already fragile statewide resource sharing program. Connecticard funding allows residents access to almost 14 million materials shared across all municipalities and is one the state's longest running resource sharing programs (1976). Reduced funding decreases incentives for towns to lend their materials to non-residents and has the potential to trigger the collapse of the program.

My 10-year-old neighbor John, new to town and not having developed a circle of friends, is coping with the pandemic restrictions by learning to repair bikes. He's read all the books at his local Wallingford Library, and was so excited to learn he could borrow some books he really wanted from the Terryville, New Haven or any other library in the state. For a kid restricted by COVID-19 regulations, this has been life-changing.

**Please restore borrowIT (formerly Connecticard) funding by \$100,000.**

- **Fund the Cooperative Library Service Units (Connecticut Library Consortium) and stretch Connecticut's tax dollars.**

The Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) is the sole remaining Cooperative Library Service Unit in Connecticut and is a direct grantee of the Connecticut State Library as per CT General Statute

§ 11-9e. CLC unifies Connecticut libraries so they can deliver a higher return on taxpayer investments by replacing duplicative research, purchasing and negotiation activities at nearly 800 libraries in every municipality. CLC manages over 40 purchasing contracts and cooperative programs that saved Connecticut's libraries an average of almost 40% on purchases of critical resources for their communities. Last year, the Stamford school district saved almost \$50,000 on library supplies, books, nonprint media and databases purchased through CLC negotiated and publicly bid contracts. The public library, Ferguson Public Library, saved over \$105,000 on books with CLC contracts. Even smaller communities benefit from our work: Ellington schools saved over \$31,000 and Ellington's Hall Memorial Library (public) saved more than \$21,000 last year.

CLC's ability to negotiate cost savings for Connecticut's libraries has been gutted by continual budget cuts (65% since 2013). In 2020, state funding only covered 14% of this cost-effective program that saved \$6.4 million in hard-earned taxpayer dollars. These cuts have also undermined CLC's ability to provide professional development and resource-sharing programs. CLC must continue to be strongly funded through the state-mandated operating grant if we are to continue to fulfill our unique and valuable mission.

**Please maintain adequate funding to Cooperative Library Service Units.**

- **Stop the erosion of the Connecticut State Library budget.**

The Connecticut State Library budget has lost 31% of its funding over the past decade. Any proposed cuts to the State Library budget will trigger the Federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) statute and result in additional federal funding cuts for this important agency. The State Library is critical not only for preserving and providing access to legal documents and for serving the blind and physically handicapped, but also for its vital role in providing much needed funding and resources for libraries in Connecticut. In addition to the borrowIT program I've discussed above, there are an additional \$103,259 in cuts being proposed between annualizing the FY21 recession and reducing operations funding for the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH). While seemingly small, when added to the cuts from previous years, they are exponentially increased and ripple out to impact every community.

**Please restore the funds to the LBPH and do not annualize the FY21 Recission.**

I hope you will not only stop the cuts to the State Library's 2022-23 Budget but will also consider funding library programs at a level that ensures sustainability for these decades-old models of successful resource sharing.

Thank you.

Jennifer O. Keohane  
Executive Director