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March 9, 2021

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

RE: Governor's HB-6439 and the State Library Budget

FROM: Leslie McDonough, Director of the Mansfield Public Library in Mansfield, CT

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.

Of particular concern is Governor Lamont's proposal to cut the Connecticut State Library's borrowIT budget line by \$100,000 (a 15% cut). This program is enormously popular and enables ALL Connecticut residents to freely borrow materials from other libraries at no extra cost. 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 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.

Connecticut residents continued to make use of the borrowIT program once most public libraries reopened in the summer of 2020. With 37% of the state's public libraries still closed to residents, Connecticut's citizens are visiting other libraries to check out materials, use public computers, and to study. Due to COVID closures and limited services at other libraries, many public libraries, including Mansfield, are undertaking more use by non-residents than ever before.

Please restore \$100,000 to the borrowIT program, and indeed, work toward fully funding the costs of this program which helps provide equity of access to all residents of Connecticut. During the current pandemic, the Governor prioritized libraries for reopening in Phase 2 and mandated that public libraries maintain the ability to serve non-residents. We have worked hard to provide those services. Please don't cut the floor out from under us, or more importantly, the people who need our services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.