



TOWN OF ENFIELD

March 8, 2021

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Jason Neely, Director of Libraries for the Town of Enfield. I am writing today to urge you to restore the \$100,000 in funding for the borrowIT CT program that has been cut in the Governor's budget.

While this has been a challenging year for everyone, I am particularly proud of how the Enfield Public Library has served our community. When everything shut down in March, my staff immediately pivoted to provide virtual programming for the community. We had a very popular concert series which provided a sense of community in some of the darkest times in March and April. My Children's Department immediately began doing virtual story times so that our youngest users would have a bit of normalcy in their lives. Getting to see Miss Kristin and Miss Lisa helped a lot of kids. We quickly began providing curbside pickup and were among the first libraries to fully open when Governor Lamont allowed it. In the fall we received an Everybody Learns Grant which we used to expand access to our services during the pandemic by installing outdoor seating, expanding our outdoor Wi-Fi and adding a private study booth that allows patrons to have private Zoom calls with no distractions.

While the \$100,000 that has been removed from the borrowIT CT program is a small number in the State's overall budget, the funding is critical to the operation of Connecticut's public libraries. The premise of borrowIT CT is that any resident in Connecticut can use any library at no additional cost to them. The funding from borrowIT CT is used to reimburse libraries that are net lenders of library materials to residents who live in different towns. The Enfield Public Library, as one of the larger libraries in the north-central region, sees many library users from out of town come to use our services every year. With the pandemic this year, many of our smaller neighbors have either not reopened or have reopened with only limited services. Their residents have been flocking to our library. For example, 2,287 items were checked out to Somers residents, 2,500 items have been checked out to East Windsor residents and nearly 4,500 items have been checked out to Suffield residents since the pandemic started. While not fully covering the average per item cost to check these materials out to non-residents, the reimbursement that Enfield receives through the borrowIT CT program helps to make this regional service possible.

A further impact of these budget cuts would be leaving federal money on the table. By cutting the borrowIT CT funds, the State Library will also lose an additional \$97,000 because the Federal Maintenance of Effort statute will be triggered. These federal funds are used to pay for the van rentals that the State Library's delivery service uses to get materials back to their home libraries. To illustrate this, if a Suffield resident borrows materials from the Enfield Public Library and returns them in the book drop at Suffield's library this service gets the book back to Enfield so that we can get it back on the shelf. If this service, as well as the borrowIT CT funding disappears, there will be no incentive for regional cooperation.

I urge you to restore the funding for these critical services so that we can continue serving our patrons during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Jason Neely
Director of Libraries
Enfield Public Library

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