

Written Testimony HB 06439

My name is Ellen Paul, I am the Director of the East Hampton Public Library. I am writing to urge legislators to restore full funding to the BorrowIT program from the CT State Library. BorrowIT is the very popular program that allows any CT library card holder to use their card at any public library in the state.

The Governor's proposed cut of \$200,000 from the State Library, including \$100,000 specifically from the BorrowIT program, would trigger the Federal Maintenance of Efforts (MOE) statute and would cause the State Library to lose an additional \$97,000. This cut not only harms the State Library but every Public Library in the state and every person in Connecticut who uses library service.

I would also like to speak to the importance of the 'Cooperating Library Service Units' line item in the CT State Library budget. The State Library provides many essential services to CT Libraries, but this line item is most vital.

The line item 'cooperating library service units' is used to fund the CT Library Consortium (CLC). CLC is the purchasing arm of the CT State Library. They negotiate discount contracts on the things libraries buy every day. In FY 19, the East Hampton Public Library used their book, DVD, library supplies and database contracts to save over \$48,000.

Five years ago, CLC was funded at \$332,500 per year but since then it has been cut to less than half that. The organization is now drawing largely from reserves to make up the difference in funding. If CLC no longer existed, I would have to negotiate all of these contracts on my own. In fact, each library director across the state would have to negotiate their own contracts. This would take a significant portion of my time and what's more, as a small public library with limited purchasing power, there is no way that I would be able to negotiate the deep discounts that we currently get from CLC.

CLC gets \$124,000 per year from the State of Connecticut and they save CT libraries over \$7M per year. At a time when the State is asking towns and school systems to work together to find economies of scale and regional approaches to purchasing, libraries are already there. Libraries are way ahead of the curve when it comes to cooperation and regionalization. To cut this funding would be a step backwards and ultimately cost us money and resources.

I appreciate your support and I would encourage you to restore full funding to the CT Library Consortium and raise the Cooperating Library Service Units line item to \$332,500. This small investment in regionalization will result in big cost savings in libraries across the state.