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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

As President of the Connecticut Library Association, as a library director in Haddam, and as a resident of New Haven, I am submitting testimony regarding HB-6439 to urge reconsideration of the proposed \$100,000 cut to the Connecticut State Library's BorrowIt CT program, which reimburses libraries for lending to (by statute) out-of-town residents. This cut may appear at first glance to be proportionate and manageable, but its impact will extend beyond the stated amount, as, after more than a decade of cuts to the CSL, its budget is now in danger of falling below the Federal Government's minimum level demonstrating maintenance of effort. This will consequently trigger an additional loss of \$97,000 in matching funds. Compounding these reductions is the loss of another \$49,800 from the from savings realized by relocating the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

It is axiomatic that when the economy declines, and when times become challenging, citizens turn to their libraries for information, programming, culture and community -- just at the time when budget cuts loom. Libraries will again need to reduce offerings just when the need is to expand.

In past years I have testified on behalf of the State Library to preserve funding for its direct services to all libraries, and its pass-through beneficiaries CLC, the Library for the Blind, and the state college and university libraries. In doing so, my thrust has been to show how each community has been impacted by these cuts, often in addition to cuts at the local funding level.

The FY2022 cuts will leave libraries more vulnerable than in other years. Not only will expenses for services and collections formerly obtainable through the CSL again fall, inefficiently, to each library, but reimbursement grants are in jeopardy. Decreasing monies to libraries which are already spending more from their own budgets to compensate for year after year of cuts is unsustainable.

Please restore to the State Library budget the funds proposed for reduction to support the libraries who depend on them, so we can continue to serve the patrons who so greatly need us.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Piezzo



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