

March 1, 2021

Jonathan C. Stock
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Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building
Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Joint Committee on Appropriations:

I am Jonathan C. Stock, retired Connecticut Judicial Branch Supervising Law Librarian and—presently—Recording Secretary for the Connecticut Library Association Legislative Committee. Both as Connecticut citizen and professional law librarian, I am appalled at the potential impact of H.B. 6439 upon public library services in our state. That dismay arises from a 31% budget reduction over 12 years since FY2008-2009. Two impact areas demand examination. 1) Impact upon general Public Library Services, long provided to all Connecticut citizens; and 2) Impact on Access to Justice through online legal research databases, also provided to all Connecticut citizens. Each will be addressed in turn.

T447 does provide a small increase for the total State Library budget over the coming Biennium: \$9,177,287 in FY2022, an increase of \$147,241; \$9,388,703 FY2023 an increase of \$211,416 over the year preceding. That modest upgrade does not, however, compensate for the loss from FY2008-2009 when our total allocation was \$13,155,908: a loss of \$3,978,261: or 30% over 12 years. Beyond net loss is the inflationary factor and impact upon matching federal funds: an impact that threatens personnel retention and CT BorrowIt/Connecticard—an interlibrary loan program that citizens have used for over 45 years.

T444 does maintain the Legal/Legislative Materials line item at \$574,540.00: the same level as for FY2020-2021. That is small comfort, however, since 12 years ago in FY2008-2009 the figure was \$1,200,000.00: a net loss of \$625,460.00. Beyond net loss is the inflationary factor in law database cost over a decade.

The impact upon all legal researchers stands clear. It means that Access to Justice has been sorely diminished. Electronic databases, many available remotely via a State Library card—especially important during pandemic and beyond—will be cut. Other electronic databases that can be accessed and searched through skilled legal reference librarians via e-mail, live chat, or telephone will also be lost for two reasons: first, inability to maintain subscriptions; and, second, personnel reductions since key positions are tied to Federal funds which—absent State contribution--will vanish. To get a full sense of what lies in jeopardy please reference:

<https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/az.php?s=33756>

Your considerate attention is most appreciated.

Sincerely,
Jonathan C. Stock