

Sally Tornow, Chairperson CLC Board of Directors

Reference: Public Hearing, Appropriations Committee, Monday, March 1st, H.B. 6439

Written Testimony

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As a retiree and the Chairperson of the CT Library Consortium (CLC), I want to share the importance of state funding to the CT State Library. The State Library provides a service that both I and my 103 year old mother have used every week. In this time of covid restrictions, it was used twice a week. I am referring to the ability of my local library to provide us books from other libraries. This service depends on the State Library's BorrowIt program to function, since that program provides reimbursement to libraries providing the service. It should be expanded, not cut \$100,000 as has been proposed in the Governor's budget. Reducing that funding also jeopardizes a further \$100,000 federal grants dependent on the state maintaining a certain level of funding. Back in 2016, The Connecticut State Library budget was 25% lower than it had been 8 years before that and has been cut even further over the last four years. It simply cannot sustain any further cuts.

While this service has made my mother's and my life so much more bearable during this past year of lockdowns and quarantines, I cannot imagine what students who need research information to perform their schoolwork would do without this service. Or what those who are ill and unable or afraid to see a doctor would do without the information provided by this service. Please don't cut a service that has existed in CT since 1972 and is one of the reasons CT is a stellar example of library service to other states.

As Chairperson of CLC, I also want to stress the importance of State Library funding in that regard. CLC is a state legislative program, is defined as a Cooperating Library Service Unit in the State Library budget and is a direct grantee of the State Library. Supporting State Library funding supports CLC and CT libraries, whether public, academic, or school. CLC provides significant negotiated discounts on many contracts that libraries must have in order to function: traditional books and magazines, ever increasing digital offerings, even the ability to loan hotspots to those who cannot afford internet in their homes among many others. CLC allows libraries to provide specific free internet services to those who are the most disadvantaged - with the eventual return to a semblance of normalcy, libraries are going to be a godsend to the state's unemployed, as those who lost their jobs due to covid begin to look for new opportunities. Those opportunities will be found at local libraries only due to CLC providing a discounted program for job searching. Those who need to further their skills to achieve job changes will find training available at the library, again due to discounted contracts that CLC negotiates on behalf of the libraries. Life long learning is a goal of the state - funding the State Library fully, ensures that goal can be met.

Cutting the State Library budget is a disservice.

With respect,

Sally Tornow, Chairperson CLC