



STATE OF CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY BOARD



CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY

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**Testimony of
Dr. Mollie Keller, Chair
State Library Board**

Concerning HB No. 6363

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT, CONSERVATION, DEVELOPMENT,
REGULATION, PROTECTION, JUDICIAL AND CORRECTIONS.**

March 27, 2009

The State Library Board opposes repeal of Sections 11-23a and 11-23b of the General Statutes as called for in Section 19 of HB 6363. Section 11-23a authorizes the State Library Board to maintain a library service center in the Middlesex and Windham-Tolland County area to serve the public libraries and public schools in each area. Section 11-23b allows the State Library to establish and maintain library service centers.

While the Service Centers have been around a long time, they have evolved to meet the ever changing needs of libraries in our state. At a time when library budgets are under stress and usage is skyrocketing, libraries, particularly small libraries, need the support that the Service Centers provide.

The Service Centers provide:

Technology Training and Professional Development

- In order to provide excellent service to their customers, library staff must continually update their skills. Librarians keep pace with rapidly changing technology and stay current with best practices in library services when they attend training at the Service Centers.
- Each Center operates a Technology Training Lab (16 seats in Willimantic and 12 seats in Middletown) and has meeting space for professional development workshops. These are the only technology labs in the state whose primary purpose is library staff training.
- 839 library staff attended 73 library workshops in 2008. The cost savings to libraries, when compared to comparable community college training, is \$54,535. Topics for these sessions included: webpage development, screencasting, online community outreach, and Microsoft Office application. Other library-specific training included early literacy best practice, serving teenagers in the library, services to older adults, serving multi-cultural communities and library space planning.

Early Literacy & Literacy Support Materials

- Materials from the service centers, support early literacy programs in public libraries and other preschool settings.

- Sets of board books for infant/toddler story hour, research-based early literacy program guides and an extensive picture book collection enable all libraries in Connecticut to offer programs that develop emergent literacy skills and educate parents.
- Book discussion sets allow libraries and schools to offer book discussion programs that enhance reading comprehension, develop a child's ability to understand more sophisticated themes and encourage reading for pleasure.

Library Resources

- Last year the Service Centers provided resources to 331 public, school and academic libraries:
 - 181 Public Libraries
 - 127 School Libraries
 - 17 Academic Libraries
 - 6 Special Libraries
- The Service Centers house approximately 150,000 items (80,000 in Willimantic & 70,000 in Middletown)
- In 2008 libraries borrowed 76,000 items valued at over \$2.7 million.
- As library budgets are stressed, libraries will rely on these resources more than ever. For example, the large print books enable libraries to satisfy this demand from older adults that do not have the funds or space to satisfy on their own.
- Libraries have online access to the catalogs for both Service Centers.
- Collections of library professional material from the centers are a cost effective way to provide librarians with the resources they need to manage their libraries.

Consulting

Offices for consulting staff are located in the service centers. Assistance is provided to libraries in the areas of:

- Public library construction, buildings and the Americans for Disability Act
- Library services to older adults, multi-language populations, children and young adults
- Long range planning and technology planning
- Support for public library trustees and library Friends groups
- Continuing Education
- Federal grant administration and monitoring

The Middletown Library Service Center is a state owned facility with a very modest operating cost (\$50,000 annually). The Willimantic Library Service Center is a fairly new leased facility with annual operating costs including lease payments of less than \$150,000. By any measure the Service Centers provide a good return on the state's investment. The State Library Board urges that the authority to operate them not be repealed.