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Testimony on Behalf of HB 6624  
Monday, March 28, 2011  
Suzanne Staubach  
Manager General Books, UConn Co-op

I'm Suzy Staubach and I am the General Books Division Manager at the UConn Co-op, the independent member-owned bookstore serving the University of Connecticut community. I live in Ashford. I come here today to ask you to support HB6624. I am speaking for myself and for other independent booksellers and retailers.

Independent Booksellers in Connecticut will collect approximately \$741,000 in sales tax this year. We operate in 23 locations in 21 cities and towns. The revenues we generate go to back into our communities.

But we operate at a competitive disadvantage compared with retailers such as Amazon who do not collect sales tax. Our customers abandon us in order to save the 6%. If Connecticut sales tax is increased, and this situation is not remedied, the disparity will be even greater.

Just this week, we had a young mom and her son in the Co-op. She asked if we had Ed Young's book, *Hooks*. We did and I took it from the shelf and handed it to her. She and her son sat down together at the little table we have in our children's department and she read him the story. He loved it. He wanted to keep it. But I heard her say; "Mommy will order it on the computer for you honey." She brought her child to our bookstore but bought it from Amazon to save paying the tax.

Ironically, that tax would have gone to pay for the schools and roads and other services she and her son expect. This is an all to common phenomenon.

We are not talking about a new tax. We are talking about the 62 million dollars in uncollected sales tax that will be owed to the State of Connecticut this year, and a projected 72 million in 2012 unless the online retailers such as Amazon begin to collect it. There is no way practical way to enforce consumers reporting and paying it on their own. This is money the state, as you know better than I, desperately needs.

The argument against this that we keep hearing is that Amazon will fire their affiliates and that these affiliates will be left without their businesses. But I wonder, how can it be good for Connecticut to favor businesses predicated on not collecting sales tax over businesses that do? How is this good for the state? How is this fair?

Interestingly, Amazon's affiliates have other options if Amazon fires them. Several other large online retailers that do collect sale tax have stepped forward and offered them a place should Amazon carry out their threats.

So I ask you to support HB 6624. This will help the state's budget and it will help the bricks and mortar stores in Connecticut remain in business. Thank you.

