



THE NORWALK PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
NORWALK PUBLIC LIBRARY/SOUTH NORWALK BRANCH LIBRARY

Testimony of Christine Bradley, Director Norwalk Public Library System
Concerning Proposed H. B. No. 5614 *AN ACT CONCERNING E-BOOKS AND LIBRARIES.*
General Law Committee February 7, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Doyle and members of the General Law Committee.

I appreciate your holding this hearing on H.B. 5614 because it gives us a chance to alert you to a problem that we have never before encountered. It seems that our money is no good. If a public library wants to buy a book in hardcover, paperback, or audiobook format, any publisher will take our money. However, when we want to purchase that same title in Ebook format, we are either flat out refused, or subject to prohibitive costs and conditions.

Public libraries do not discriminate against EBooks. We have the same check out and purchasing policies as we have for other books. Publishers, however, have been discriminating against public libraries in the selling of EBooks.

Their unwillingness to sell to libraries may stem from their own fears or misunderstandings about these new technologies. But I fear the beginning of a new divide, not the digital divide that libraries have worked so hard to ameliorate, but a readers' divide. These publishers are preventing people from participating in the great recycling center that is the public library. If you download your EBooks from the public library, you can read only certain titles and only backlists of certain authors. If you can afford to pay for each book you download, then you can read whatever you want.

Norwalk Public Library's book budget is \$250,000; our patrons expect us to buy books on the best seller list. It's their tax dollar at work. But publishers have decided that library customers are not equal to individual customers when it comes to EBooks, that the library's money is not as good as the individual's. This has never before happened. In fact, libraries are used to getting a considerable discount on books because we buy so many copies.

In CT, we have a public library in every city and town because we value a literate populace. We need your help in convincing the publishing industry that public libraries are their best customers, not a threat to their business. Publishers, however, are becoming a threat to the reading public.

EBooks are most popular with people who read a lot. One of our biggest challenges in the library this winter has been helping people get the knack of downloading eBooks to the many different kinds of Ereaders and tablets that are now available. That is problem we can deal with. The problem with which we need your help is to be able to buy the books they want to download.