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Senator Doyle, Representative Byram, Senator Witkos, Representative Carter, and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill #5477, AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE-WIDE PLATFORM FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTRONIC BOOKS.

Last year I appeared before your committee to support legislation I introduced to ensure access to e-books for public, educational, academic and corporate libraries throughout Connecticut... access that was spotty at best. At first glance, it seemed appropriate to pursue adoption of a type of enforcement legislation: if a publisher offers titles for sale to the public, they would be obligated to offer those same titles to libraries. I vigorously pursued adopting a legislative remedy for the problem. Through the legislative process, questions were raised regarding the legality of enforcement action, and the possibility of market forces solving the access problem. At the same time, the process allowed the public to learn the extent of the lack of e-book availability throughout the state.

I believe the course of action we adopted, commissioning a comprehensive study of the entire situation, was indeed the best approach. I did have concerns that a "study" would be given lip service, and be used as an excuse for inaction. These concerns have proven totally ungrounded. I commend the Office of Consumer Protection for conducting a very comprehensive study, which was eagerly awaited and has not disappointed. Indeed, libraries and legislatures throughout the country are using it as a benchmark for addressing this situation. The study not only addresses the current e-book availability issue, it provides an overview and clarification of the essential role libraries play in improving our culture.

When I first read the report, I was frustrated that enforcement legislation was not recommended. However, upon study and reflection I came to believe the recommendations are indeed in the best interests of the State. I agree wholeheartedly with legislation that allows the State Library to oversee creation and management of a statewide e-books purchasing platform. This will not only help ease the problem of access, it will achieve uniformity in cost and technology throughout all Connecticut libraries.

On behalf of all Connecticut library patrons, I thank you for your crucial role in making Connecticut the national leader in providing access to this valuable new technology.