

March 3, 2015

Appropriations Committee
Connecticut State Legislature

Dear Committee Members,

As a taxpayer and the library director in Wallingford, a town whose residents depend on its public library in so many ways, I am extremely concerned that the proposed cuts to libraries stand to reverse and/or eliminate programs that directly benefit our residents and its public library.

Libraries in our state provide an enormous return on investment, especially during tough economic times. Funds appropriated through the Connecticut State Library, and the resource sharing that has been so carefully developed in Connecticut, has enabled libraries to remain nimble and to respond quickly to the public's pressing needs for shared services and access to high quality information. Among their many roles, libraries provide Internet and wi-fi service to those who otherwise may not have access, early literacy services for children of all backgrounds, information and services for job seekers, and access to books, information, and educational resources to people of all ages. With access to services and programs administered by the Connecticut State Library, our libraries—working together and/or in partnership with other state and local agencies—provide creative, lasting solutions to local problems.

Programs that allow libraries to share resources and realize savings have been critical to the success of libraries. The Governor's proposed cuts to the Connecticut Program and the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) will be especially difficult to weather. The Connecticut program enables libraries to loan items to residents of other towns and to participate in a reimbursement structure that is managed equitably. Prior to returning to my home state of CT two years ago, I was the director of a municipal library in New Jersey—a state that has been unable to establish a statewide library card or reimbursement program. Connecticut's Connecticut program was the envy of many a New Jersey librarian! **Dismantling Connecticut's program, which works efficiently and effectively, would be a major setback for the residents of our state.** It will directly and immediately impact our library's bottom line in Wallingford, a community that thrives on lending to and borrowing from other libraries.

Reduced funding for the Connecticut Library Consortium will likewise have a direct impact on the quality of life for our residents. CLC, which relies on a grant from the state for more than half of its operating revenue, yields enormous return on investment by negotiating millions of dollars in savings for libraries. Without

these discounts, the Wallingford Public Library will have no choice but to reduce the number of books, programs, and databases we provide to taxpayers.

Finally, it is disheartening to see funding for humanities programming and resources on the chopping block in Connecticut. These funds represent a tiny sliver of the state budget and yet they go so far to keep our residents enlightened and engaged about Connecticut's history, traditions, and future. Funding for the humanities is already at an all-time low. It seems shortsighted, and a real blow to our sense of pride in the Nutmeg state, to reduce what little remains in public support for the humanities.

In Wallingford, the town tax dollars going to the public library represent only 1.9% of the municipal budget. With demands on the municipal budget continuously growing because of various mandates and declining revenues, it is unlikely that the municipality will be in a position to increase the percentage appropriated for public library services. Continuing the support provided through State Library administered programs is therefore more important than ever for maintaining library services at the local level. The Governor's proposals would severely impact critical programs that directly improve lives in Connecticut's communities. His proposals would also repeal library statutes that enable these programs to exist. I urge you not to allow that to happen.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very sincerely,

Jane Fisher
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