

Save CT Library Funding

My name is Lisa Masten and I am the director of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library. I am writing to ask you to not to approve the governor's budget proposed cuts in the Senate Bill 942, Section 36, that would repeal Connecticut General Statutes section 11-9e (Cooperating Library Service Units) and Connecticut General Statutes sections 11-31a to 31c (the Connecticut card statutes). If these statutes were repealed Connecticut libraries ability to have access to better pricing for library materials and online resources at reduced rates due would be gone. The Cooperative Library Service Units or in our case the Connecticut Library Consortium, save thousands of dollars each year for libraries and towns. They negotiate with specific vendors to reduce the purchasing price because the libraries as a group will purchase these materials from them. This is allowing libraries to purchase more with the money we are allotted each year. We can purchase books, DVDs and online resources at lower costs. We are spending our money each year more efficiently and giving our patrons better service because we can offer them much needed materials. In addition, the money that we save is allowing us to purchase many online resources and databases that students of all ages are using for school work. Many of the databases in Newington are being used by teachers for school assignments on a daily basis. My library would not be able to afford some of these databases if we had to purchase them individually.

If the statutes 11-31a- 31c for the Connecticut card program and grants to libraries as part of the program are repealed Connecticut residents' ability to access library materials throughout the state would be gone and the reimbursement the libraries receive as part of this program would severely impact many libraries ability to offer the much needed services, materials and technology that we offer the public for free. Right now patrons can go to any library and check out that item on their card no matter what town they live. They can also return it to any library and it will be transported back to the owning library via the state delivery system. This system works so well for everyone. It adds a level of convenience to patrons' everyday life that makes living in Connecticut more appealing. In addition, people can also get almost any item they want to read, view or listen to even if their hometown library doesn't own it. The item is delivered to their library and will be sent back to the owning library when they are done with it. Many book discussion groups are able to borrow enough books from libraries throughout the state to have their monthly discussions without the library having to purchase extra copies. We all share to make this happen. It is also convenient for people who live in one town and work in another. We have so many regular patrons who work in Newington but live elsewhere. They love that they can check out materials from our library. It makes their lives so much richer and easier to be able to do that. The other major benefit of the Connecticut card program is that it allows libraries to share resources. It has been a life saver in the past ten years or so as town budgets and library budgets continue to be flat or are cut. We are offering better service to people of all ages by allowing them access to the all the libraries throughout the state. We purchase to meet the needs of the Newington community. We have parts of the collection that are very strong in certain subject areas based on our patrons' needs. But we can still meet the needs of patrons who are looking for more esoteric subjects, who are researching specific subjects by finding the libraries that own the items they need and either sending them there to check them out or having them delivered to our library.

I am respectfully asking that you do not repeal these statutes. I cannot imagine not being able to offer the borrowing and delivery options that we have today. By repealing the Connecticut card program and the grant money, you would be basically shutting down any sharing of materials and denying free access to library materials throughout the state. When we talk about the Connecticut card program to our patrons they are so impressed how forward thinking the state is with this service. The elimination of it would such a huge step back. I would also like to add that the Cooperative Library Service Units are essential to all of the libraries. We are being more fiscally responsible with the way we spend our money because we are buying as a unit at a lower cost.

Sincerely,

Lisa Masten, Library Director
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