

Dear Governor Molloy,

I am gravely disappointed to hear that Connecticut is contemplating budget cuts of this serious magnitude on the library community. In an era of severe inequality, in a state that is considered one of the most lopsided in the country, you are talking about gutting the services that really help people from all walks of life. I read recently that "New York and Connecticut had the largest gaps between the average incomes of the top 1 percent and the average incomes of the bottom 99 percent. In both states the top 1 percent earn average incomes roughly 40 times those of the bottom 99 percent." (From a study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute: <http://www.epi.org/publication/unequal-states/>)

Libraries help address this inequality by providing free access to books, media, newspapers, and other materials. In my public library in Wilton, unemployed people use computers to help in their job searches; students use databases for research and meet tutors in study rooms; parents bring their children to story times and activities designed to foster a love of reading and lifelong learning; seniors discuss their favorites in book groups; immigrants learn English in ESL classes; and people attend jazz concerts, author talks, movie screenings, and professors' lectures. The library represents a public service that *everyone* can enjoy, not just the most wealthy among us. It is indeed the heart of the community.

I recognize that balancing the budget is a very important priority, but it is also critical that we maintain services that make life worth living in Connecticut. Libraries help keep our citizens educated and informed. We all want to live in a state that is known for its high quality of life as well as a great place to do business. I was surprised and dismayed to read a Time magazine article showing that our residents have a low opinion of the state (<http://time.com/77196/the-worst-states-to-live-in-according-to-people-who-live-there/>). But I feel confident that eliminating funding for libraries is a sure way to make people feel worse, not better, about living here.

I hope that you will take these factors into consideration when deciding what budget cuts are required this year. Libraries are known to be an efficient resource when balanced against other expenses. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Regards,

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