March 6, 2019

To the Members of the Education Appropriations Subcommittee:

Library supporters from around the state are submitting written testimony and speaking here today regarding H.B. 7148 and the Connecticut State Library’s budget’s impact on their work. Most are choosing just one or two items to address, but my testimony must be broader to address the worth of the State Library’s budget to every library in every setting, and ultimately for every Connecticut resident.

We are very grateful that the Governor’s Proposed Budget does not actually cut any lines in the State Library’s budget—this is a welcome respite after nearly a decade of continuous rescissions. Today the State Library’s staff is 30% smaller than it was ten years ago, and the State Library’s budget is 34% smaller. The State Library is long past “doing more with less” and well into “doing less with less”. The past decade’s cuts have threatened programs that have long served to reduce taxpayer costs, promote resource sharing, and create effective models for regionalization.

The Connecticut Library Association is requesting that legislators consider restoring support for key programs as summarized below. Each of these programs and services fulfills libraries’ duty to serve every person regardless of their ability to pay.

- **Statewide Digital Library (Budget Line 12061):**
  - **Restore support by $415,000 to ensure digital resources for all communities.**
    - Every Connecticut resident can access research resources for school, work, or personal development.
    - Specialized collections for K-12, Colleges & Universities, and the general public.
    - Negotiated by the State Library to provide equal access for a much lower price than individual libraries could achieve on their own.

- **Connecticut Library Consortium (CLSU) (Budget line 16022**
  - **Restore state support by $208,100 to cover at least 30% of its budget.**
    - Negotiates substantial discounts on books, media, and supplies for all types of libraries statewide not provided by any other contract or purchasing group.
    - Generated over $7,000,000 of local savings for all types of libraries, returning $60 for every tax dollar invested.

- **Legal/Legislative Library Materials (Budget Line 12172):**
  - **Restore state support by $250,000 to support legal and legislative materials that serve Connecticut’s citizens, legislators, state agencies, and the legal community.**
    - Increasing this line will help secure up-to-date online legal resources as well as purchase new titles.

ctlibraryassociation.org
borrowIT (CCard) (Budget line 17010):
• Restore state support by $300,000 to support equity and effective voluntary regionalization.
• Every Connecticut resident can use their hometown public library card at every other public library.
  o Facilitates last-minute homework woes with the ability to visit libraries with later hours, weekend hours, and larger collections.
  o Commuters are able to access libraries in towns where they work.
  o Children with divorced parents can use public libraries in both parents’ towns.
  o Caregivers can borrow materials for housebound relatives.
  o Promotes access to specialized collections and services.
  o Libraries are reimbursed for serving non-residents. Many small communities receive “net-plus” payments for serving non-residents, funding local services.
  o A unique, equitable program. In most states non-residents have to pay for non-resident cards to use other public libraries—shutting out lower-income families from access to resources.

We know that the State is in fiscal crisis and appreciate the challenges you face as legislators in making these decisions. The Library Association’s request for restored funding for these programs of the State Library does not ask to return to 2009 funding levels, but rather to 2017, when years of cuts had already taken place. We ask you to remember that when times are tough people turn to libraries for services that save them money, sharpen their skills, and help them find jobs. We stretch our dollars and return $5 to $8 to the community for its investment. We provide free programs and services to every citizen, at every stage of life. We are trusted and valued by the general public as highly as nurses and firefighters. We level the playing field for disadvantaged populations and the State Library helps us do that.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Byroade, MSLIS
President, CT Library Association

Library Director
Cragin Memorial Library
Colchester