TO: The Honorable State Representative and Senators of the Appropriations Subcommittee for Elementary and Secondary Education

RE: Governor’s HB 7148

I am a life-long Connecticut resident, with degrees from the University of Connecticut and Southern Connecticut State University. I have lived and worked in 13 different Connecticut towns and currently reside in what may be one of the best places in our state, New Haven. I have never left, as many other residents have, because I believe Connecticut has some of the best educational, cultural, historical, natural, residential and employment opportunities of any of the 50 states. Those of you who have chosen to serve our great state as its elected officials must believe this too. But you also must know that the on-going economic crisis and drastic cuts we have seen in Connecticut have eroded and threatened the viability of many of these resources and thus eroded the quality and viability of life for Connecticut residents.

For the last twenty years I have had the privilege of working in one of the most important Connecticut resources, the public library. Over the course of my career I have come to understand that the public library is not a resource to be funded only when times are good. In fact, use of the public library goes up when times are bad. While the public library may not be counted among the statistics of other social service agencies, we are another safety net in our communities. We provide help for the jobless, warmth for the homeless, connection for the friendless. We are the bridge from one stage of life to the next for the immigrant, the student, the widowed, and the veteran. By providing free books, internet access, preschool classes, ESL materials, financial literacy programs, and technology training we ensure every person in our community has the opportunity to succeed regardless of age, race, or ability to pay. With 30% of Connecticut households considered Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) public libraries can cover some of the gaps so families and particularly their children don’t fall all the way through. And we do this for only 1.2% of our local municipal budgets.

But funding for public libraries over the last 15 years has remained flat when adjusted for inflation. So we need help in order to keep providing these crucial services. Traditionally our safety net has been the resources of the Connecticut State Library and the Connecticut Library Consortium. Through shared databases, the interlibrary delivery
system, group purchasing discounts and professional development opportunities we have been able to cover the gaps left by our local funding. However, huge cuts to both of these resources have created a large hole in our safety net. The Governor’s Bill 7148 keeps the hole from getting bigger and for that we are grateful. But to really be able to help our residents, and keep Connecticut a viable place for everyone who lives here, we need funding to be restored to these programs.

While you have many asks before you, I respectfully submit for your consideration restoration of the following:

- $415,000 for the Statewide Digital Library
- $208,100 for the Connecticut Library Consortium
- $300,000 for borrowIT CT
- $250,000 to the Legal Legislative Library Materials line

Thank you for your time, your consideration and your service to Connecticut.