To the members of the Appropriations Committee:

Good evening, my name is Glenn Grube and I am the director of the Avon Free Public Library and the immediate past-president of the Connecticut Library Association. I am here to talk about the Connecticut State Library’s budget, which has seen drastic cuts over the past decade.

My message is simple: restored State Library funding equals more resource sharing across Connecticut. Libraries are built on resource sharing. Providing a collection of books for a community to share is more economical than having each resident buy their own books. Libraries have become a lot more than just their collections of books in the 21st century, but the same principle applies to modern library services.

Funding for the Statewide Digital Library has been cut by 43% since 2009, making it harder for Connecticut taxpayers and students to access information. Through the $1.5 million that remains budgeted for this program, the State Library makes trusted information sources available online to all residents, provides a statewide catalog of the books and other materials available at individual libraries, and offers an electronic means to request interlibrary loans of those materials. All this avoids duplication of services by individual libraries and provides a $30 return on every $1 of state money invested. Restoring cuts will allow this to continue and provide additional resources for small businesses and job seekers.

The Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) has fared even worse, and now receives only 15% of its operating budget from state funding, provided through the Support for Cooperating Library Service Units line. In 2009, CLC received $350,000 in state support to negotiate contracts and obtain discounts for academic, public and school libraries across Connecticut. This year, CLC is level funded at $124,402, meaning they will need to dip into their reserve funds once again to keep serving libraries. Avon Library alone saved well over $70,000 last year, using CLC negotiated discounts on everything from books to supplies to computer software. Statewide, the savings are $7.4 million, meaning a $60 return on every state dollar invested. These discounts cannot continue if CLC staff are not there to negotiate them.

The borrowIT program is a 40 year old example of regionalization, allowing any Connecticut resident to use their library card at any public library in the state. Incentive grants encourage full participation in this program and reward net-lending libraries, who share more materials with non-residents than their own residents borrow at neighboring libraries. In 2017, over 3.8 million items were loaned through borrowIT, at an estimated value of over $58 million. The Connecticard grants are level funded at $703,638 again this year, only .005% of the overall value of the program. Restoring cuts to Connecticard Payments ensures library users can continue to take advantage of reciprocal borrowing.

In addition to supporting public, school and academic libraries, the State Library is the Principal Law Library for Connecticut, providing legal resources to taxpayers as well as other State Agencies. Funding for these vital resources has dropped from $1.2 million in 2009 to just $574,540 this year. Without up to date legal resources added to the collection, and with individual agency budgets facing the same constraints that the State Library is feeling, it is harder for state workers to do their jobs effectively.

Restoring cuts to the State Library’s budget is an investment in hundreds of public, school and academic libraries in every town across the state and that is an investment I urge you to make with this budget.

Glenn Grube
Director, Avon Free Public Library
Past President, Connecticut Library Association