Good Afternoon —

The following is my written testimony for the budget hearings on Wednesday, March 6th.

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My name is Ellen Paul. I am the Director of the East Hampton Public Library. I am writing to urge legislators to restore full funding to the line item 'Cooperating Library Service Units' in the CT State Library budget. The State Library provides many essential services to CT Libraries, but this line item is most vital.

The line item 'cooperating library service units' is used to fund the CT Library Consortium (CLC). CLC is the purchasing arm of the CT State Library. They negotiate discount contracts on the things libraries buy every day. Last year, the East Hampton Public Library used their book, DVD, library supplies and database contracts to save over $48,000.

Five years ago, CLC was funded at $332,500 per year but since then it has been cut to less than half that. The organization is now drawing largely from reserves to make up the difference in funding. If CLC no longer existed, I would have to negotiate all of these contracts on my own. In fact, each library director across the state would have to negotiate their own contracts. This would take a significant portion of my time and what's more, as a small public library with limited purchasing power, there is no way that I would be able to negotiate the deep discounts that we currently get from CLC.

CLC gets $124,000 per year from the State of Connecticut and they save CT libraries over $7.4M per year. At a time when the State is asking towns and school systems to work together to find economies of scale and regional approaches to purchasing, libraries are already there. Libraries are way ahead of the curve when it comes to cooperation and regionalization. To cut this funding would be a step backwards and ultimately cost us money and resources.

I appreciate your support and I would encourage you to restore full funding to the CT Library Consortium and raise the Cooperating Library Service Units line item to $332,500. This small investment in regionalization will result in big cost savings in libraries across the state.

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