March 6, 2019
Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT  06106

Honorable members of the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

I am writing to you and giving testimony in reference to Governor Lamont’s FY2019-20 budget proposal, in particular the Cooperative Library Service Units: Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) line of the CT State Library budget - Bill # 7148 that was flat-lined at 124K.

I am currently the director of the Hamden Public Library, and at the end of my career. I have been in leadership roles for most of that 43 years, and have always enthusiastically participated in my professional organizations. I often took a particular interest in legislative matters, as the CT State Library afforded public libraries much support as directors worked diligently to make a difference in the lives of residents of their communities.

I have seen a lot and lived through a lot...the good times and the bad. My frustration is that there don’t seem to be any more good times. I have watched as the delivery service for some libraries around the state has nearly disappeared, positions for state library consultants and librarians have disappeared, and funding for CLC, one of the most vital and far-reaching services, has been slashed by as much as 63% since 2014. Now it is being proposed that the funding that remains be flat-lined or reduced even more.

CLC provides a life-line for libraries of all types in this state. Hamden’s savings due to cooperative purchasing agreements was over $70,000 this past year alone. As the Town of Hamden cut the library’s operating budget drastically, you can imagine what a help this savings was as we struggled to provide needed resources for our residents. The training and ongoing educational opportunities offered by CLC helps to keep my staff informed and at the forefront of innovation. These are but two of the services that are now in jeopardy.

I also know whereof I speak, as I am an Executive Board member of CLC. I see firsthand how this agency struggles to stay viable for the good of all the libraries in the state. The executive director and her staff work tirelessly for the cause. Work has even been completed on a Business Plan that would help generate revenue for the organization, requiring less dependency on state funds. But it is difficult to move that plan forward when cuts in funding continue to interfere.
Before I end my career in CT libraries, I would like nothing more than for our state legislators to finally recognize that CLC has been a shining example of what everyone seems to be touting - REGIONALIZATION. Libraries in CT have worked in cooperative ventures for years, and have reaped the expected benefits of it. It is a mystery to me why some are not seeing that libraries are a smart investment and CLC is a smart investment that benefits more people than you may realize.

Please restore state support for CLC back by $208,100 to cover at least 30% of its budget. You will be helping to save an agency that is so important to so many. You will be supporting an agency with proven success as a regional cooperative that helps drive all libraries in the state to serve their cities and towns.

Marian Amodeo
Director, Hamden Public Library
2901 Dixwell Ave.
Hamden, CT 06518