To the Honorable State Representatives and Senators of the Appropriations Subcommittee for Elementary and Secondary Education:

My name is Lisa Karim. I join you today as the Director of the Simsbury Public Library, the Vice President of the CT Library Association, board member of the Library Connection Consortium, Library Connection Finance Committee member and as library user myself. Thank you for allowing me to make the case for restoring funding to the Connecticut Library Consortium and Connecticut State Library. Libraries bolster local economies, foster life-long learning, and strengthen our communities, making this a high priority and a smart investment for our state.

Every day I see the impact that libraries and library staff have on people’s lives. As the heart of the community, libraries are a resource for people of all ages to find what they need to improve their quality of life. At the library, everyone is welcome and everyone is treated equally. We are committed to serving our communities and we embody democratic principles.

My testimony comes at an important time, because libraries are offering more than they ever have before, but with less support from the state. Every day libraries do more: we offer more support to business and job seekers, we create more access to information and resources, we generate more opportunities for hands on learning for people of all ages, and we do it all with limited resources. We are experts at leveraging every dollar to our community’s best advantage, and one way we do that is through resource sharing. Restored state library funding means more resource sharing across CT, which equals more for our communities at a lesser cost.

The first priority is to Restore state support for Connecticut Library Consortium by $208,100 to cover at least 35% of its budget. Funding CLC stretches Connecticut’s tax dollars.

- CLC’s statutory charge to negotiate cost savings contracts for Connecticut’s public libraries has been gutted by continual budget cuts. In 2018, state funding only covered 15% of this cost-effective program that saved $7.4 million in hard-earned taxpayer dollars. These cuts have also undermined CLC’s ability to provide professional development and resource-sharing programs.
- CLC manages over 40 contracts that provide a $60 public service return on investment for every tax dollar used.
- Our libraries need Connecticut to fund more than 15 percent of CLC’s budget for it to continue to function effectively. Restore state support by $208,100 to cover at least 35% of its budget.
The second priority is to **Restore state support for **BorrowIT CT** **by $300,000**—that’s .005% of the overall value of the program. BorrowIT CT allows state residents to **borrow materials from 192 public libraries across Connecticut and defines resource sharing.**

- Right now, state funding reimburses libraries less than one-quarter of the cost of loaning materials to non-resident borrowers through BorrowIT. If this rate doesn’t increase, libraries across the state will begin to opt out of BorrowIT, severely restricting access to materials and driving up costs for the remaining libraries.
- Public libraries need reimbursement rates that work so that every state resident can continue to access BorrowIT.
- In 2017, over 3.8 million items were loaned through BorrowIT. Connecticut’s public libraries saved its citizens over $58 million through this program. Restore state support for BorrowIT by $300,000—that’s .005% of the overall value of the program.

The Connecticut Library Association calls on you to restore funding to the Connecticut libraries and invest in our communities. Libraries strengthen communities, and when our communities reach their full potential, we will also realize our civic potential, becoming the state we know we can be. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.