Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to support the Connecticut State Library’s budget request to restore funding to four important State Library programs. In particular, I ask you to restore state support for Cooperative Service Units - Connecticut Library Consortium by $208,100 to cover at least 30% of its budget.

The Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) is the last of 6 original regional cooperative library service units established by General Statute 11-9e in 1975 “to improve library service through coordinated planning, resource sharing and the development of programs too costly or impractical for a single library to maintain.” We are a 40-year-old program that is has a strong return on investment, but we need your help to keep us going.

Who are we? The Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) is a 501(c)3 and a statewide membership collaborative serving all types of Connecticut libraries (public, K-12, academic & special) by helping them strengthen their ability to serve their users. We achieve our mission negotiating and managing public bids and other collective purchase agreements, coordinating shared collections and providing hundreds of free or low cost educational and professional development programs that enable librarians to build their skills and learn from each other.

Last year, we helped over 750 Connecticut libraries realize more than **7.3 million dollars** of savings on critical books, media, databases, materials, supplies, training, and more. Our members realize up to 72% off list price on critical products and services they need. Our work stretches already thin library budgets, relieves individual libraries of the need to spend limited staff resources on negotiation, procurement and training, and gives them more time and resources to address critical needs like increasing literacy, helping job seekers, providing resources for immigrant populations and gearing up to assist the public with Census 2020. CLC manages over 40 contracts that provide a $60 public service return on investment for every tax dollar used. We are unique in that we focus on resources required by libraries and not those negotiated by other purchasing groups.

CLC currently receives $124,400 from the state as an operating grant which only covers 15% of our operating budget. We’ve seen our state funding cut by 65% in the last 5 years. We’ve responded to the severe cuts to our state funding by reorganizing, streamlining operations and seeking ways to diversify our funding. In addition, we have drawn heavily on our reserves to enable us to build new programs that will allow us to be sustainable. But new programs and funding models take time; at the current level of funding we are running out of reserves. Therefore, we seek a restoration of our funding to cover 30% of our budget. Without additional funding, we will not be able to maintain the high number of public bids and contracts that our communities need. If CLC were to cease to exist, Connecticut’s libraries would
have to spend up to $7.3 million more for the same books, databases and resources they need to serve their communities.

At a time when our state is looking at increased efficiencies and regionalization of services, it doesn’t seem to make sense to de-fund a program that does both efficiently. I respectfully urge you to hear my plea and the pleas of other library professionals to restore state funding to State Library programs including Cooperative Library Service Units (CLC).

Sincerely,

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