Sally Tornow, Director, New Milford Public Library, New Milford, CT

Reference: Public Hearing Wednesday, March 6th, State Library Budget

Written Testimony

New Milford Public Library is very fortunate in that, as a municipal library, its book budget is generously supported by the town. However, that said, in order to supply our patrons with what they want from their public library and satisfy our budgetary stakeholders, we cannot do it without the discounts we receive through our CT Library Consortium (CLC) membership. CLC’s funding through the State Library has been cut from $332,500 over the last two years, to its current level of $124, 402. CLC is making every effort to be self-sustaining, but that process takes time and it is drastically reducing its reserve fund to provide the services on which CT libraries depend. It is imperative that the funding be restored to its previous level of $332,500 so that libraries, whose budgets have already been reduced by their municipalities, can continue to serve their public. CLC has a limited amount of reserves and cannot continue to provide the intensive amount of work it requires to negotiate the discounted contracts with even less than the minimal staff it has. The other option is to increase dues to the member libraries, but they cannot afford an increase with their already reduced budgets.

Over 25% of our population cannot afford internet access at home, but most students must submit their homework through Google Docs on the internet. While libraries can provide that access, not every student has the ability to travel to the library. With a hotspot checked out from the local library, students can submit their work from home. However, libraries can only afford to lend those hotspots because of CLC’s negotiated discount. Technology is only getting more expensive and more pervasive and more necessary. Without increased funding, how can CLC be able to research the technology, find a vendor, and negotiate a discount? Please restore CLC’s funding to its previous level of $332,500.

BECAUSE CLC IS A GOOD BUSINESS DECISION.