March 6, 2019

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

I am writing today in my role of director of the Wallingford Public Library as well as the immediate past chair of the Connecticut Library Consortium and a member of the board of directors of the LION libraries consortium. Thank you in advance for considering my testimony in support of restored funding for the Connecticut State Library (CSL) and the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC).

I urge you to restore funding to $322,500 for the critically important statewide library cost savings program, the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC). In the Governor’s 2020-2021 Biennial Budget, CLC funding is drastically reduced by $208,100. This reduction impacts the users of every public, academic, K-12 school, and special library in Connecticut. CLC provides cooperative purchasing to over 750 Connecticut libraries and saved Connecticut libraries over $7.3 million in 2017-18 by leveraging discounts through collective buying power. Connecticut’s public libraries saved almost $55 for every $1 they invested in CLC in FY 2017-18. In addition, in FY 2016-2017, 1,765 Connecticut library staff benefited from CLC’s free or low-cost professional development programs.

Users of the Wallingford Public Library have seen a reduction in materials and services as a direct result of costs passed on to us for services that were formerly funded through the CSL. For 40 years, library users depended on the inter-loan delivery service provided by the CSL to expand the materials available to them. This shared access allowed readers access to materials that go far above and beyond what my own library’s materials budget can offer. Recent cuts to DeliverIT, the delivery service funded by the state library, resulted in my library paying an additional $7,600 annual delivery cost to supplement this core service. That is $7,600 less we have to purchase books and other materials for library users.

Libraries in our state provide Internet and wi-fi service to those who otherwise may not have access, early literacy services for children of all backgrounds, information and services for job seekers, and access to books, information, and educational resources to people of all ages. When access to services and programs administered by the Connecticut State Library are fully funded, our libraries—working together and/or in partnership with other state and local agencies—provide creative, lasting solutions to local problems.

In Wallingford, the town tax dollars going to the public library represent only 1.9% of the municipal budget. With demands on the municipal budget continuously growing because of various mandates and declining revenues, it is unlikely that the municipality will be in a position to increase the percentage appropriated for public library services. Continuing the support provided through State Library administered programs, including the Connecticut Library Consortium is therefore more important than ever for maintaining library services at the local level.
Thank you for your consideration.

Very sincerely,

Jane Fisher
Library Director, Wallingford Public Library