

February 20, 2017

The Honorable Paul Formica  
The Honorable Catherine A. Osten  
The Honorable Toni E. Walker  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Formica, Senator Osten and Representative Walker:

I am writing to you on behalf of the CT Library Association (CLA) regarding the Governor's proposed biennial budget which includes elimination of all funding of the borrowIT CT (formerly Connecticard) program. This reduction would effectively end the ability of most public libraries in our state to lend materials outside of municipal boundaries to their neighbors across the state.

By reimbursing libraries for the loans they make to residents outside their communities, the borrowIT CT reimbursement program allows libraries to function regionally which is very important in a state with 169 different municipalities of widely varying demographics. The program allows citizens to visit libraries across communities and borrow materials that may not be available at their hometown library, that they can use for any purpose, including education and seeking employment or advancement. The program also helps those who may be within easy travelling distance to a library in a neighboring town but not have transportation to their hometown library. The potential and realized benefit of being able to access materials not available in one's own town far outweigh the minimal cost of the program.

There is no question that constituents living in the variety of communities in our state do not enjoy the same level of public services, whether they be for education, recreation, or quality of life. Cutting this small amount from the State Library budget will eliminate a program that has been in place since 1976, creating more equal access to information for all citizens.

borrowIT CT circulation accounts for 15% of the total circulation among public libraries in the state, or 3.89 million items loaned. The cost of lending these items is estimated at \$58 million.

This cut affects everyone in the state. The state library budget has been reduced to 39% of what it was in 2009. Today increasingly, libraries are a social safety net, serving disadvantaged, unemployed and underemployed people. More than ever, cuts to library services can have drastic negative effects.

Additionally, the CT Library Association requests your support against any efforts to eliminate the statute (C.G.S. 11-31b) which established and maintains this valuable program.

Sincerely,

Karen Jensen  
2016-2017 CLA President