How To

Testify at the hearing on March 8th and submit written testimony.

Here is the link to register to speak: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_egTZhZl5QaGBcXhnIkfFmg
with clear directions. Registration will close on Monday, March 8, 2021 at 3:00 P.M. Register ASAP.

The registration form is brief and easy to complete.
- One field asks for “organization” answer either Connecticut Library Association or your Library’s name.
- One question asks, “Do you represent a State Agency or Municipal Entity?” Answer No.

In your testimony refer to HB-6439, but you do not need its very long and unwieldy name. (AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAL ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.)

If you’re unfamiliar with testifying at the Capitol, here is a great source of information on what to expect and what to do: https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/content/yourvoice.asp. It’s good to provide written testimony but not to read that testimony word for word. Spoken testimony is limited to three minutes. Sometimes legislators ask questions. If you don’t have an answer, say that you don’t but offer to follow up via email or a call if they’d like.

Submitting Written Testimony is easy! Please email written testimony to APPTestimony@cga.ct.gov in Word or PDF format. Testimony is limited to two pages. Testimony should clearly state testifier name and related subject. Written testimony is due by noon on March 8th.

Talking Points

This year our message is simple. The time for cuts at the Connecticut State Library is over.

Federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

After more than a decade of cuts, any cut to the State library budget is now also a cut to Federal dollars. The proposed cuts totaling $200,000 will lead to an additional $97,000 cut in Federal IMLS funds. A $297,000 cut will damage vital programs and services of the State Library.

The Connecticut State Library receives Federal money from the Institute of Museum & Library Services. The Governor’s proposed cuts to the State Library would trigger the Federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) statute and stands to lose $97,000 in Federal funds for Connecticut. This additional cut would force the State Library to find additional savings, further eroding the State Library’s ability to meet the needs of Connecticut’s citizens.
**borrowIT CT (formerly C-CARD)**

Governor Lamont cuts this Connecticut State Library budget line 15% with a $100,000 cut. The borrowIT CT program, created in 1976, is enormously popular and enables ALL Connecticut residents to freely borrow materials from other libraries at no extra cost. This program supports equity and regionalization and saves money for communities. At an estimated value of $52,000,000 for the borrowed materials and a cost of $700,000, borrowIT CT has tremendous return on investment. The program has long been underfunded, now providing only $0.20 per item loaned, although the estimated cost to libraries to lend is $1.05 per item. Once funded at over $1 million, the program has been whittled to 57% of the 2008 appropriation. Reducing funding decreases incentives for towns to participate, leading communities to pull up drawbridges to non-residents.

Connecticut residents continued to make use of the program once most public libraries re-opened in the summer of 2020. With 37% of the state’s public libraries still closed to residents, Connecticut’s citizens are visiting other libraries to check out materials, use public computers, and to study. Due to COVID closures and limited services at other libraries, many public libraries are undertaking more use by non-residents than ever before. For example, Manchester has seen a six percent increase in loans to non-resident borrowers since reopening in June 2020.

Restore $100,000 to Connecticut’s borrowIT CT program.

**Connecticut State Library**

The Connecticut State Library has lost 31% of its funding over the past decade as cuts and accumulating rescissions have cut away at the staff and services of the agency. Those cuts undermine services and resources for the public and students from Kindergarten to graduate school. Rescissions seem like the painless way to reduce the budget, but over time their damage is real and lasting. Libraries of all kinds will either take on additional, unanticipated costs or reduce or eliminate services. For public libraries, schools, and higher education this amounts to a second tax.

**Other Useful Talking Points**

If you’re struggling with what you want to say, here’s a few additional talking points.

- The Governor prioritized libraries for reopening in Phase 2 and mandated that public libraries maintain the ability to serve non-residents—that ability depends on borrowIT remaining viable.
- A brief story or summary of how your Library pivoted to serve the public during the pandemic, noting that even when doors were closed, we never lost contact with our communities.
- If your Library received one of the Governor’s Connectivity Grants this fall, that’s worth noting, especially if you were able to expand access/services/hours as a result.
- If your library has taken on additional costs (delivery costs, increased CLC membership dues, etc.) or reduced a service due to the continuing cuts to the State Library state what those are. Emphasize that cuts at the State level are false savings leading to higher costs/reduced services locally.