



THE LIBRARY

utica public library

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Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology

Public Hearing: Funding of Public Libraries

December 13, 2016

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Darby O'Brien

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My name is Darby O'Brien and I have served as the Director of the Utica Public Library since 1990. UPL is the central library for the Mid York Library System.

The city of Utica has a population of 62,235 according to the 2010 census. This was an increase over the 2010 census, the first time the population had increased in a census since 1930. This increase is due to an influx of refugees and immigrants. Thus the population is very diverse. 29% of the residents live in poverty. The city of Utica, similar to many upstate cities, face economic challenges due to the loss of manufacturing jobs and the relocation of the Griffiss Air Force base in the 1990's.

There are three issues that I will address in my testimony: the NYS Public Library Construction Program, Public Library System Funding and Utica Public Library services and programs.

NYS Public Library Construction Program

I am grateful for the increase in construction funding from \$14M to \$19M. The Utica Public Library opened in 1904 and has benefitted from this program over the last decade: installation of an HVAC system, repairing the roof, upgrading HVAC software, refurbishing the windows, upgrading plumbing and restrooms and replacing one of two boilers. These projects totaled nearly \$2.5M and approximately 23% of those costs were covered by this program. We are completing the boiler project this year. There are over \$1M of capital projects that remain to be completed, including the installation of an ADA compliant elevator. My recommendations for this program are two: Allow the inclusion of engineering and architectural fees as eligible expenses and increase the funding for this program so that it is comparable to the funding available for school district capital projects.

Public Library System Funding

The Utica Public Library benefits greatly from the funding that is given to the public library systems. I calculate that at least \$200,000 is saved each year by the UPL's participation in Mid York services. This translates into less local tax liability for the people of Utica while they still have access to cutting edge services: databases and e-content. UPL does not have its own computer system

or Internet services. Rather we use the centralized services made available through Mid York. In addition our payroll costs are subsidized and the delivery system results in a collection that is shared throughout our area. System funding helps the member libraries to cooperate and create greater efficiencies in services and collections. The more NYS funding that is given to the public systems the more taxes are saved locally. I urge you to increase this funding and I can assure you that my colleagues in Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties agree with me.

Utica Public Library Programs and Services

UPL is committed to technology access and instruction and early literacy opportunities. Each month there are nearly 5,000 uses of our public computers and Wi-Fi services. Technology instruction is available through classes and tutoring. The tutoring focuses on skills that patrons need for employment. Last month over 600 children attended programs at UPL or at sites in the community. The majority of these children are enrolled in pre-school programs and come from families that struggle with poverty. Recently we sponsored two programs that each drew more than 1,000 participants to UPL: Fandemicon—a popular culture convention and Trunk or Treat—a Halloween celebration.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony to your Committee. Please contact me at 315-735-2279 x202 or dobrien@uticapubliclibrary.org if you require more information.