



Pioneer Library System

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leading libraries forward

December 14, 2017

Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology
Room 513M, The Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Committee,

I am the Assistant Director of the Pioneer Library System, a cooperative library system providing shared services to the 42 small and rural public libraries in Ontario, Wayne, Wyoming, and Livingston counties. We manage an online library catalog that gives every resident in our four counties with access to over 1M library items, we deliver library materials to all 42 libraries, we provide continuing education to library staff and trustees, and we implement onsite computer/technology support for libraries' computer and networking systems. Our libraries are an important part of the region's educational network, providing lifelong learning opportunities to community members of all ages.

Our libraries not only provide services, classes, and events to carry out their missions as part of the education system but also maintain and grow a facility that supports their efforts to the community. With this in mind, a majority of our library buildings are over 100 years old. These structures are beautiful and charming yet designed in a way that does not meet the needs of modern-day library users and services.

For example, the Warsaw Public Library is currently undergoing their long-range planning process and all of the stakeholders who have commented on the future of the library, including the community, staff, and board, have expressed interest and concern regarding the space restrictions of the library. Their small town adores the library, and they encourage it to grow, primarily in the area of the meeting, event, and computer space. This library takes advantage of NYS Construction Aid every year for small projects. However, funding becomes an issue with the large-scale projects required for additional space.

The additional funds appropriated to our system during the 2017-2020 grant cycle allowed us to provide \$647,198 (previously \$512,365) in beneficial aid to 16 of our member libraries. The funds supported projects such as the Geneva Public Library's

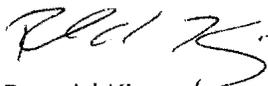
flexible tutoring/computer lab space, the Palmyra Community Library's expanded parking lot for their newly renovated building, and historic restorations and energy efficient upgrades of Wood Library in Canandaigua.

While this increase was a great benefit to the Pioneer Library System and member libraries, the libraries must still cover at least 25% of the project costs due to the grant specifications. This match makes large projects, even with a full 75% construction grant, difficult to afford for small libraries. A helpful alteration to the Construction Aid program would be lowering the percentage of library contributions to 10%. This change would allow the system to recommend higher funding amounts to projects, in turn, reducing the libraries financial obligations.

Library systems in New York are the models of shared services. Investing in systems ensures that every resident, even if living in a rural community, has access to lifelong learning opportunities through her local public library. However, for systems to continue to lead libraries forward into a strong and enduring future, we need adequate funding and the flexibility to award those funds.

Thank you for convening this important discussion about library funding. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,



Ronald Kirsop
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