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Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments regarding the recommendations for changes to the state library code that will be a component of Senate Bill 1225.

I recognize that a recommendation has been made to specifically define “operating budget” as it applies to the statutory standard of 12% of a libraries operating budget to be spent on materials for a library to be considered eligible for incentive for excellence aid.

I would like to add to that recommendation by commenting on the aspect of the statutory standard to be met for libraries to be eligible for incentive for excellence aid that requires a library that currently expends 12% or higher of its operating budget on collection materials to increase the amount expended on the collection by 5% annually (or the percentage increase in the state aid appropriation, whichever is less.)

For libraries who currently expend 25% or higher of their operating budgets on collections this standard will become unobtainable. It would be more effective to set a goal for the ideal percentage in which the state would like libraries to spend on collections out of their operating budgets.

For example if 25% of a libraries’ operating budget is established as the goal to be achieved by state libraries then all libraries spending under that percentage would be held to the standard of increase but those currently spending at the percentage or above would be exempt from the increase.

It is not realistic to have this standard of increase for libraries that expend 25% or higher of their operating budgets as stated above as it will inevitably become unobtainable to achieve. There is a certain percentage that libraries need to maintain for each of its operations and the percentage spent on collections needs to be balanced within the overall picture.

I would also like to comment on the recommendation to “provide some level of financial support to local libraries providing service to residents of neighboring municipalities.” The state library card program when fully enacted had provided some compensation for the use of non-residents by a local

library. This is a growing trend in which improved access to materials has made it more efficient for the sharing of library services to populations that extend beyond the local municipal community served by a library. Many libraries border other counties that have municipalities that do not support a local library. 2009 statistics indicate that the average non-resident (out of service area usage) in Allegheny County is 30% of a library's work.

The obligation of each local community to sustain this service is placing an undue burden on the local library. As a result library services to local residents are in jeopardy of being compromised. There will always be communities that do not support a public library. Not all communities can support a public library. We need to provide funding that will ease the burden as well as incent the libraries that support non-resident usage. If we want to have a seamless sharing of resources we need to recognize the cost that is required to do so.

I would like to make an additional comment on providing "some level of financial support to local libraries providing service to residents of neighboring municipalities" As stated above the more efficient our system of sharing materials has become the more libraries become borderless in their services. The definition of circulation solely based upon activity over the circulation desk is outmoded. This definition does not provide enough recognition for the actual work that libraries do. If the definition of circulation could be tied to the owned item instead of strictly over the desk activity it would provide for the broader scope in which libraries share resources. It would also provide a cleaner mechanism for determining a library's turnover rate as turnover rate should be tied to the collections that a library owns and not to the circulation activity across the desk that in contemporary libraries is often materials from other libraries' collections.

Sincerely,

Sharon Bruni