

UTICA PUBLIC LIBRARY

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BRIGHID O'BRIEN, Director

New York State Division of Budget

Public Hearing in Utica, NY

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My name is Darby O'Brien and I have the privilege of serving the people of Utica as the Director of the Utica Public Library. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you this evening. My comments will concern New York State's investment in libraries, specifically public libraries.

For the second year New York State has allocated \$14 million for public library construction. Because of this program the Utica Public Library has been able to implement one major project and plan another one. Last year we installed a new heating system and added ventilation and air conditioning. We were awarded \$100,000 for this \$1.1 million project. Next year we will refurbish and renovate the Library's windows, a \$538,000 project. I have submitted a request for \$151,107 for our window project. This funding allows us to leverage additional funding from other sources. While windows, wiring and heating do not have an emotional pull, these projects are crucial to maintaining this historical structure as well as insuring the safety of our staff, patrons and materials. During our HVAC project we discovered that the electrical wiring had deteriorated to the danger point. We were able to rectify this potentially deadly situation because of the funding from New York State. I urge you to make this funding permanent. In order to plan for the future and address capital needs we need to be assured that the Public Library Construction Program will be a continuing part of New York State Library Funding.

Public libraries are models of cooperation and consolidation because of the public library systems that are established throughout New York State. Through the Mid-York Library System the Utica Public Library receives the behind the scenes services that are costly yet crucial to our ability to provide quality library services for our customers. These services include a centralized computer system, delivery, resource sharing, cooperative purchasing, and cooperative administrative tasks (i.e., payroll, insurance). Mid-York enables us to put most of our funds into direct customer services and saves us at least \$200,000 each year in non-incurred costs. Mid-York does this for each of its 43 members. This past year supplemental system aid equals \$3 million of which Mid-York received \$90,000. Mid-York used this allocation to fund two cooperative projects that individual libraries would not have been able to provide on their own. Our customers benefited greatly from the downloadable audio books and the Regional Read projects. Please make the supplemental system aid a permanent part of New York State Library Funding so that Mid-York can continue to facilitate innovative projects that benefit every resident in Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties.

I will close with a glimpse of the Utica Public Library on a daily basis: it is a 13 year old Kenyan refugee receiving reading tutoring and enthusiastically demonstrating his new skills; it is a senior citizen learning about the wonders of technology so that he can email his grandson who lives in a distant city; it is the displaced worker who has found a new job after attending our computer classes; it is a middle school student doing her homework at the library because she does not have a computer at home; it is a single parent who does not read well receiving the skills to insure that her 3 year old is ready to read when he goes to school; it is the young, the old, the poor, the wealthy, the new Americans reading books, borrowing DVDs, asking questions: all improving their lives and thus our community, state, country and world.

Thank you for your consideration

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