

**Testimony before Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology
Hon. Thomas J. Abinanti, Chairperson
At Albany, NY on December 13, 2016**

Presented by Wanda R. Bruchis, Mid York Library System Executive Director

Chairman Abinanti and esteemed Assembly Members who also serve on this Committee: John Ceretto, Steven Otis, Phillip Palmesano, Joseph Saladino, and Michaelle Solages.

I appreciate being able to personally address you in order to provide input on the impact of the 2016-17 state budget has on the mission of the Mid York Library System and its 43 member libraries in the 21st century.

I understand that the Committee is interested in learning about the services and programs libraries are providing in their local communities and how libraries are collaborating and using technology to better leverage their resources. The Committee is also seeking testimony to determine the future funding needs of public libraries and the NYS Public Library Construction Grant.

The Mid York Library System, located in Utica, was formed over 50 years ago and serves a population of 372,839 in Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida Counties, covering a geographic area of 3,279 square miles. As a cooperative public library system, we work in partnership with forty-three autonomous libraries that provide an array of services which reflect the local communities they serve. The relationship formed by our collaboration has created a way in providing equal access to knowledge resources along with assisting and training people in accessing and using them.

While the funding increase included in the 2016-17 state budget has had a positive impact on fulfilling our mission, we are still a long way off from recovering from the drastic measures we had to take due to the funding cuts in 2009 while struggling to provide costly 21st century services and thereby stay relevant to our changing public.

The increase in funding has allowed Mid York to initiate long overdue but essential activities and continue to provide others that were at risk of being abandoned or further delayed.

Examples include:

- IT-upgraded all networking equipment including new wireless access points in all libraries; bandwidth upgrades in 12 libraries(5MB x 768kb to 15MB x 2MB)
- Business Office-Continue to subsidize payroll services for over half (24) of our member libraries

New initiatives that Mid York was able to launch with the additional funding are:

- Streaming service to all patrons for a variety of formats-eBooks, audiobooks, movies, music and television programs
- Building “discoverability” of library materials through online searches
- Online user registration and renewal of existing library cards
- Pop-up library to support our libraries marketing efforts and build community relationships and awareness
- System-wide membership to the NYLA (New York Library Association)

The Committee expressed interest in determining the future funding needs of the NYS Public Library Construction Grant. Libraries are very appreciative of the \$5 million increase in the NYS Public Library Grant allocation. This represents an increase of \$144, 678 (\$549,774 total) for the Mid York libraries, yet the total project amount requested was double that. Other applicants dropped out over concern that the amount of their awards would be so small that the required matching contribution would be beyond their budgeted means. Another issue for most of the Mid York libraries is the ineligibility of architectural and engineering fees-necessary first steps for construction projects. Allowing these fees to be included, perhaps on a deferred payment basis, along with additional Construction Grant funding would help conserve resources for libraries.

The Committee specifically asked for testimony on how libraries and systems can realize greater savings by engaging in collective purchasing and methods that can create efficiencies and conserve resources for libraries while utilizing available technology. Library systems represent a pioneer organizational model which proves that regionalization of services works. Providing cost effective ways for our member libraries to deliver essential services that they cannot afford to supply independently is what we do.

Public libraries are always evolving, driven by the communities they serve. Library systems are always evolving, driven by the needs of the libraries they serve.

Thank you for your thorough and thoughtful consideration and ongoing support of libraries and library systems.

Respectfully Submitted,



Wanda R. Bruchis