

To: New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Educational Technology
Re: Annual Budget Oversight Hearing on funding of libraries in New York State for fiscal year 2017-2018
Date: January 3, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views regarding funding of libraries in New York State for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. The final approved budget for the State's FY 2017-2018 included \$95.6 Million for Library Aid as well as \$24 Million for Public Library Construction Grant Program.

My name is Terry Kirchner and I am the Executive Director of the Westchester Library System (WLS), one of the 23 cooperative public library systems in New York State, comprised of 38 member public libraries that are located within the geographic boundaries of Westchester County.

Library Aid

Westchester's portion for WLS and its member libraries of Library Aid FY2017-2018 was just over \$2.7 Million, and the Local Library Services Aid portion of system funding payable directly to the member libraries was approximately \$279,000. Below are some examples of the cost-saving services provided through WLS's Library Aid allocation:

- **centralized cataloging services** for all titles purchased by the member libraries and **shared access to over 5 Million books, DVDs and CDs** as well as **training for library trustees and staff**;
- **administration and coordination of system-wide grants and purchases**;
- **outreach programs for underserved populations** such as:
 - = *Westchester Seniors Out Speaking (WSOS)* and *Senior Benefits Information Centers* that provide information about Medicare and other government benefits to seniors and their caregivers,
 - = *HSE Connect!* project that pairs learners with trained volunteers so that they can more successfully prepare for and pass the high school diploma equivalency test in NYS,
 - = *WEBS career and educational counseling services* at libraries that help individuals transition to new careers, reenter the workforce and start new businesses,
 - = *Correctional Facilities support and re-entry services* to formerly incarcerated individuals looking to improve their literacy and job skills;
- **over 16 digital resources** that allow individuals to engage in online learning, reading, listening and viewing 24/7. Two examples of successful online learning products include the following:
 - = *Lynda.com* courses are taught by industry experts and focus on the improvement of business, creative, technology and personal skills [2016 had 4,529 users; 6,363 hours of videos viewed; 1,157 courses completed].
 - = *University of Fashion* lessons are taught by fashion industry professionals who aim to inspire and educate and have been integrated in existing makerspaces programs in libraries [total accesses went from 190 in January 2015 when first initiated to 2,658 as of June 2017—an increase of 1200%].



2016 #s

WESTCHESTER LIBRARY SYSTEM EMPOWERS LIBRARIES

1.1 million
e-books, audiobooks, databases and more

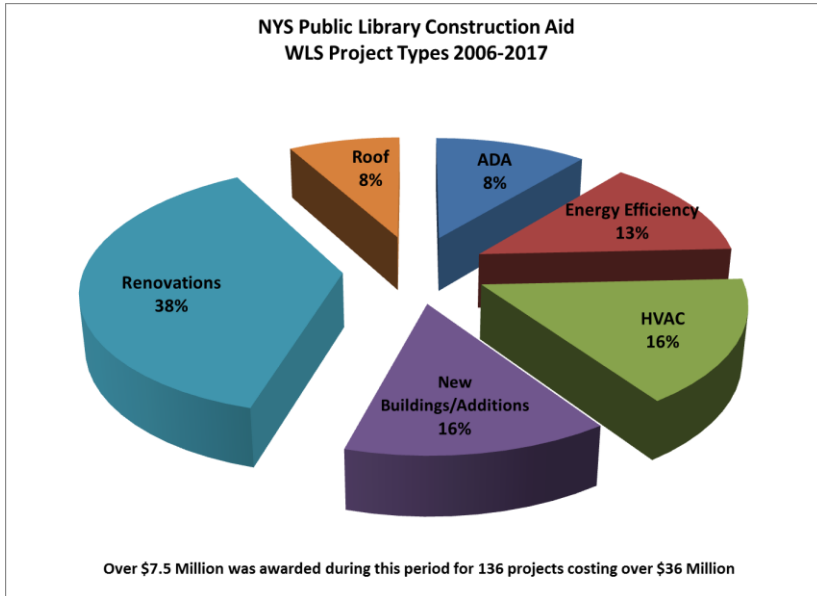
ELECTRONIC RESOURCES AVAILABLE 24/7

14,879 WSOS participants	2,195 WEBS participants	477 HSE CONNECT! participants
-----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------------

DIRECT SERVICE PROGRAMS

State Aid for Library Construction

These construction-related funds are often the only means that allow WLS member libraries to move forward



on vital projects that they might not otherwise be able to afford – especially with the addition of a lower match (from 50% to 25%) for economically disadvantaged communities. The last approved round of construction grant awards (FY2016-17) went toward important infrastructure upgrades to handicapped accessibility, technical, electrical, window and HVAC systems as well as creative initiatives for installation of solar panels and a dedicated makerspace. All of these projects help the libraries provide their communities with a safe, weather-proof environment where individuals can have comfortable and quiet spaces to learn, engage with others or conduct business with access to Wi-Fi.

Current Funding Deficiencies

Since 2009, Library Aid has not been fully funded according to the formulas outlined in Education Law. If the formulas in Education Law were honored, then the total of Library Aid would equal \$102.6 Million and WLS would receive approximately \$189,000 more (approximately 6%). In addition, the member libraries would have received an additional \$20,000 via Local Library Service Aid to support their activities. This does not even consider inflation for this period of time!

Future Needs

Public library systems like WLS continue to provide the technology training and support that allow libraries to meet the public’s growing demand for downloadable electronic content; access to e-government forms and documents; computers for creating online resumes and submitting electronic job applications; and digital literacy training. Public library systems and public libraries provide an essential safety net for individuals no longer served by other institutions. The programs and services at libraries are geared to help individuals of all age and education levels discover new opportunities and learn new skills. With additional funds, WLS and the member libraries can help improve the quality of life for all of our communities. Well-funded public library systems and public libraries will foster the growth of stronger, better educated, and more economically independent communities throughout New York State—a worthy investment for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry L. Kirchner
Executive Director