



Mid York
LIBRARY SYSTEM

Mid-York Library System | 1600 Lincoln Ave., Utica, NY 13502 | (315) 735.8328 | FAX (315) 735.0943

**Testimony before Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology
Bob Reilly, Chair
At Albany, NY on November 29, 2011**

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

Chairman Reilly and esteemed Assembly Members who also serve on this Committee: Assemblyman Abinanti, Assemblyman Boyle, Assemblywoman Clark, Assemblywoman Meng, Assemblyman Molinaro, Assemblyman Palmesano, Assemblyman Roberts, and Assemblyman Zebrowski, I appreciate being able to personally address you in order to provide input on the 2011-12 state budget as it relates to the Mid York Library System and its 43 member libraries. Mid York Library System was formed over 50 years ago and like the other 22 public library systems in New York State, it is a pioneer organizational model which proves that regionalization of services works. Public library systems work and here's how. Through consolidation, our cooperative system has been able to provide an outstanding level of library service to the public in each community within Mid York's service area consisting of Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida Counties. Mid York makes it possible for the public to access many services too costly for the member libraries to provide on their own. As local funding diminishes, our libraries turn to Mid York more and more to assist them in continuing to provide essential services to the people in their communities. While each library is autonomous and our budgets are small, they and Mid York work together to ensure that tax dollars are spent in the most efficient ways possible.

I feel that the Governor and Legislative Members have identified specific goals that the constituents of New York hope will be furthered by the current state budget and beyond: promote local economic development, stimulate private sector jobs, reform outdated governmental processes, and provide children with the best possible education. I would like to highlight the crucial role that the Mid York Library System and its member libraries have in addressing these goals. I believe this approach will address why further cuts in state library aid will not only derail these goals, but will have a devastating impact on the communities located in Mid York's service area.

- Promoting economic development-
 - The Obama Administration indicates that broadband accessibility is critical to US citizen welfare and the national economy. Currently, all our libraries provide broadband services and Wi-Fi access. This access provides citizens with on-line business opportunities and allows low-income citizens to compete on a level playing field with wealthier Americans. In the case of the village of Jordanville, the library provides the only broadband access point for the community and the surrounding area. Included in my testimony is a thank you note from a resident given to the Jordanville Library detailing the effect Broadband access has on her family.
 - Along these lines, an essential economy of scale benefit provided by the system to the libraries is IT support. Mid York's talented and highly skilled IT staff of 3 fulltime and one part time person services and maintains over 500 computers, peripheral equipment and the complex networking backbone that these machines run on.



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It would cost an individual library \$70/hr to hire a network engineer or \$299 for onsite repair to fix a computer with a virus. Not only is it cost prohibitive for most libraries to have their own IT department, libraries simply could not tolerate these fees by outside vendors so "out of order" signs would abound.

- Stimulate private sector jobs-
 - Small businesses create more than three-fourths of new jobs. Mid York in concert with several libraries, has partnered with area Chambers in providing classes to their members on utilizing Web 2.0 technologies to assist them in creating or enhancing their online presence while understanding the impact social networking can have on their companies. In the near future is slated similar training on mobile technology.
 - Collaboratively, we provide technical support and other resources to assist people searching for jobs or career advancement and continue to expand on the use of E-services for training, employment, digital literacy and education.
 - An economy of scale online resource Mid York is currently providing is a product called "The LearningExpress Library". We pay an annual fee of \$10,600. The average cost of a GED test practice book is \$25.00. If each of our libraries had to buy a copy of just the GED practice test book available through LearningExpress Library, it would cost them \$1,075. Therefore, it would be prohibitive for them to purchase the necessarily huge array of practice and course books for their communities. Another example of savings- The official online SAT course costs \$69.95 for one year. 43 libraries times \$69.95 = \$3,007. If *ten students* in each of our member libraries takes the LearningExpress Library SAT test preparation class, that is a savings to the residents of our three counties of \$129,301. Unfortunately with the current funding levels we cannot afford this online resource so it has been eliminated from our 2012 budget.
- Reform outdated governmental processes-
 - Library staff is knowledgeable in providing assistance and training to patrons needing access to e-government resources. Not only that, but people go to libraries to fill out their tax returns online because they cannot afford an Internet connection or live in an area with limited or no Internet connectivity. As a direct result of the State Department of Taxation closing all of its regional offices, our libraries are reporting that they are even busier than before during filing season.
- Provide children with the best possible education-
 - In a recent study performed by economic researchers, their findings provided solid evidence that early literacy services provide a lasting effect on long term economic success. They went on to report that early literacy skills produced better financial results, far exceeding those on state-funded economic development projects (Rolnick and Grunewald 2003).
 - For years, public libraries have lead the charge in urging new parents to begin reading often and early to their infants and young children as well as offering programs such as "lapsit" story times to further their involvement in early literacy. Throughout the



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year, the libraries in the Mid York service area offer hundreds of free early literacy programs. During the summer of 2011, Mid York administered its \$6,000 portion of the statewide Summer Reading Program Grant which assists the libraries in helping children of all ages strengthen their reading skills. Nearly 28,000 children participated in Summer Reading Program activities offered by the Mid York libraries. Once again demonstrating the effectiveness of consolidation. Once again, Public Library Systems work.

Since 2008 in addition to eliminating \$50,000 worth of online resources including LearningExpress Library, we have instituted far more detrimental cost saving measures. Mid York eliminated 9 staff positions in 2008 followed by an additional position in 2011 reducing its work force by one-third.

Besides giving testimony regarding the impact of the current budget, another aspect of this hearing is to determine the future needs of public library systems and public libraries. Looming over Mid York and the Utica Public Library is the prospect of losing an additional 25% of our state aid which is triggered by the Maintenance of Effort Regulation found in Education Law, Section 272(1)(j)(1) and (2). The law states that "In the event that the sum total raised by local taxation exclusive of capital expenditures for the support of a public library system and participating libraries in a twelve month period is less than ninety-five per centum of the average of the amounts raised for such purposes by local taxation for the two preceding twelve months periods, the state aid to which such library system would otherwise be entitled shall be reduced by twenty-five per centum." In 2011, Oneida County cut library funding by 25%. In the recently passed 2012 Oneida County budget, library funding is being cut by 50% and eliminated in 2013. These cuts are directly attributed to the 2% Property Tax Cap legislation without the benefit of mandate relief. Library Systems and Central Libraries can apply for a Maintenance of Effort Waiver which we will do in 2012. If we are not granted the Waiver, then, on top of the million dollar county funding loss to Mid York and its 22 Oneida County libraries, 25% of Mid York total state aid package or nearly \$430,000-which is equivalent to nearly one half of our operating budget, is in jeopardy. I urge you and other elected officials to give the issue of mandate relief your immediate attention.

I also strongly feel, echoed by many of my colleagues in the Mid York Library System that modifying the State's Pension Plan for those individuals currently working or retired under tiers 1-4 would accomplish several things: strengthen and preserve the Plan's benefits; and, generate revenue which would go a long way toward stabilizing the State's economy. Our thoughts include instituting contributions by employees till retirement while making the retirement income taxable.

It is pretty evident that the future needs of public library systems and public libraries can only be met through a stable funding stream. Public libraries are always evolving driven by the communities they serve. Public library systems are always evolving driven by the needs of the libraries they serve. The agility created by our collaboration has created a way of providing equal access to knowledge resources along with assisting and training people in accessing and using them.



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The Mid York Library System, like its counterparts is an asset-not a liability on the State budget balance sheets. Providing cost effective ways for our member libraries to deliver essential services that they cannot afford to supply independently is what we do. Libraries are community education centers, guarantors of providing equity of access to information, a cornerstone of our democracy. Together, we promote and support the communities we serve. We already are part of the solution in achieving economic growth for New York State- not part of the problem.

The bottom line: Public Library Systems work.

Thank you for your consideration and all of your past support.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wanda R. Bruchis
Executive Director

To Whom it May Concern;

I'm writing in regards to wireless coming to Jordanville.

I can't even begin to tell you how excited I am about this!!!

I'm a resident within the hamlet here with my husband and 3 children.

With wireless coming to the residents here, there will be a whole new world of experiences to come to our small community via the internet. In my home we have 2 desktops & 2 laptops - but with dial up has our internet service we can't all be online. ;)

I realize that we can have dial-up service or pay a much higher price for satellite service - not to much of an option for people with families. At least my children can take their laptops to the Jordanville library

And get internet service while either inside or outside the building. My children have done this since wireless came to the library many, many times.

As a customer of dial-up internet, let's just say it's rough. We get "booted" or the screen freezes. It takes forever (so it seems) to load a page. Or has my family says when they try to call "why can't I get thru is someone on the computer again?" My response "you can thank having dial-up for not getting through."

I visit our library frequently and it's amazing the range of people inside using the computers. I see young children, men, women, the elderly, sitting using a computer. It's maybe for reading a local newspaper, watching a local newscast or to research a topic. I have seen people with webcams chatting

With friends or family, At night.
You will see some people using
their computers in the driveway
of the library.

My oldest son has help an
elderly man add pictures to an
email. He also helped him figure
out how to send it to more
than just one person. My
children use the library to
do homework for school - this
way it doesn't take an entire
evening to do one assignment.

So with wireless coming to
our community everyone will be
able to access the internet
from either their homes, cars or
within the library. It gives all
age groups a chance to explore,
learn and enjoy the world from
a touch of the fingers. I'm sure
many residents never thought
it would come to Jordanville, NY.
I personally am super excited
about it!!! - I'm so happy

that Mr. & Mrs. Collins are
allowing the use of their
Silo so the community can
have wireless service. Also,
hats off to the library for
allowing wireless to come to town.
I look forward to being
able to get rid of dial-up
internet service!

Thank you,
Sherr Wilsey