<u>Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology</u>

<u>Funding of Public Libraries</u>

December 13, 2016

Good Morning/Afternoon. My name is J'aimé Pfeiffer and I am the School Library System Director at Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES in Saratoga Springs. Thank you all very much for your time today in consideration of libraries and library budgets and technology. I'm here today as a representative of the School Library Systems Association of New York State (SLSA). Our organization is comprised of School Library Systems from all 37 BOCES and the "Big 5" city schools. Each School Library System Director provides services and resources to all public school districts and many non-public schools in his or her region, enabling a combined 5.74 million students across New York State to have equitable access to resources they might not otherwise be able to obtain.   You know these schools because they are in your legislative districts. And you know the wide disparities between schools in those regions, whether it's because they are a small, rural K – 12 district or a large urban district with thousands of students – and everything in between.   School librarians work with and impact all students across all grade levels and in all curricular disciplines. Research in 27 states, including an extensive study in New York State, shows that schools with certified school librarians and quality school libraries increase student scores on average between 3% - 5% across the board, after taking into account socio-economic factors. School Library Systems are able to provide valuable resources and services to these schools and thereby impact all students across New York State.

The School Library Systems Association has been forward thinking in offering coordinated consortium purchasing of online resources (databases, eBooks) for our K-12 students throughout the state. Many years prior to the creation of Vision 2020, SLSA created a "model of success" to provide discounted pricing for New York school libraries which "encourage[s] school districts to actively expand and promote access to the school library collection of online resources, e-books, and web 2.0 tools, available 24/7, to create learning and enrichment opportunities that reach beyond the school day and encourage year-round

learning." For example, in 2015 – 2016, there was an approximate total of over $9.25 million spent by districts for online database resources through their BOCES School Library Systems. Discounts on products vary greatly by vendor but assuming an average of 15% across the board, without the consortium agreements to reduce pricing in New York based on volume purchasing, those same databases would have cost districts upwards of $10.64 million, thus providing an estimated savings to our school districts of over $1.3 million across the state. The goal of this initiative was to provide New York state students with the best quality resources at the most cost-effective pricing, and each year we see more and more resources being purchased as a result of good pricing.

In addition, School Library Systems use state funding for purchases in our regions that many districts would be unable to purchase for their students otherwise. For example, in my BOCES alone, all students have access to almost 5,000 eBooks and audiobooks. If this represents an average number of purchases, students across New York have access to over 200,000 eBooks and audiobooks. I purchase two online databases for my entire region annually: *TeachingBooks* which gives online access and links to thousands of websites on authors and books to all of our teachers and students, and *NoodleTools*, a software program that allows students to cite their sources, create and organize notes for research, collaborate with other students on projects, and share all of that electronically with their teachers. I purchased 10 sets of "Dot & Dash" robots that are loaned to schools to learn coding and to integrate lessons into their curriculum. Last school year I was able to offer 29 professional development workshops that were attended by a total average of eight workshops per librarian in my region, and included a range of topics from Teacher Leadership to Technology Tools. We held our 4th Annual "Battle of the Books" in which almost 350 students in Grades 3 – 6 competed in relation to 10 books they had each read. I sent 15 librarians to state conferences which ensures that school librarians are current on literacy skills, research and technology when teaching students to think critically, evaluate sources and synthesize information. All of this I was able to provide to my districts through State funding. Multiply those numbers times 42 BOCES and Big City Schools, and you can see the immense importance that state funding has on programs that have a significant and positive impact on all of our students. This is especially

beneficial for those districts whose library budgets consist only of the NYS library aid of $6.25 per student.

We appreciate very much the State Legislature's efforts to increase funding for our systems; however, the actual dollar figures are approximately what they were in 2002, and pricing for the resources and services we provide have increased considerably in 16 years, and will continue to do so. By your continual support to put funding back to where it should be, we want you to know that we will continue to provide services and resources for all students and to help continue to decrease the costs to our local districts wherever we can.

School Library Systems also support our school librarians by providing opportunities to attend professional development workshops and attend local, state and national conferences to keep them up-to-date on the latest trends in information literacy, curriculum standards, and technologies. School Library Systems advocate for students by urging administrators, teachers and legislators to support certified school librarians. School libraries foster a community of learning and literacy and equitable access that lead to college and career readiness, academic achievement, independent reading, and lifelong learning. As you know, we are living in an age of "information overload" where students have access to almost everything known to man, but often lack the skills to filter and synthesize it into quality research. And as we are all well aware, we now have an alarming concern over what is real news and reporting, and what is fake. School librarians who have access to all students teach the independent information seeking and evaluation skills, improved independent reading, and greater social responsibility that are so greatly needed.

In areas where districts have been forced to cut their budgets drastically, the professional development, mentoring, and resources that we provide is vital for students, teachers and librarians. Without the power of cooperative purchasing and state funding, many of our schools could never afford to buy the resources they receive through School Library Systems, many of which are available in multiple language translations, full-text audio so students can follow along, and have multiple reading levels for differentiated instruction. One of our key goals is to advocate for the future of school libraries and certified librarians K – 12 in order to facilitate the advancement of digital citizenship and 21st Century media literacy skills.

Our children need today's school librarians and libraries in order to provide them with the college and career readiness and information literacy skills they need to become tomorrow's leaders, teachers, and researchers. We know that you feel the same way and will continue to work to include adequate funding in the state budget for our children's futures. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to discuss school libraries and librarianship with you.