

Good afternoon. I am Dr. Joyce Latham, Director of the Onondaga County Public Library and the chair of the Public Library System Directors Organization of New York, an association of public library administrators.

Last year, there was an increase in state aid for public library systems that is important to our continued vibrant participation in the development of a civil society. Public libraries are the beachhead in those communities struggling with economic change, cultural challenge and sub-par literacy. Public library systems provide the support that allows individual public libraries to function as information hubs in their particular communities.

Systems offer services that require specific expertise, such as centralized network strategies and online digital library services. Systems have had to accomplish these tasks, however, with no increase in funds to pay for network coordinators, pc technicians and server farm maintenance. These services are possible because funds have been shifted from other, more traditional services, such as technical processing – that operation which makes it possible to put a book, CD or DVD on the shelf so it can be found by a patron walking in the door. More and more technical services are outsourced to businesses outside the state.

Systems further their resource sharing mission by providing delivery services ... allowing every library in a geographic area to loan their materials to patrons in other libraries that do not have that particular title. However, the use of delivery services has grown, and the cost of gas, vehicles and staffing to support such services has steadily increased. Still, there has been no reliable adjustment to our revenues to support this vital service.

In 2006, after many years of flat or reduced funding, the state budget finally contained some new money: a \$3 million increase for library systems and \$14 million for public library construction.

Last year, the governor and the legislature appropriated \$8 million in aid to systems and an additional \$14 million in public library construction aid. We greatly appreciate these increases. In Onondaga County, they will fund literacy initiative, materials acquisitions and a study of our delivery services. However, with these funds tagged as “one-shot” we lose the ability to plan for the long term. Because these funds are so vital to sustaining library services around the state, it is of the utmost importance that this \$8 million in supplemental system aid be continued and made permanent.

Our other priority is continuation of the public library construction funding. The State Library has documented a need of over \$2 billion in public library facilities. Over 60% of library buildings are more than 40 years old and do not have the capacity or wiring for today’s online environment. 34% are not fully accessible by the disabled. The \$28 million in construction funding received the last two years needs to be made permanent so libraries – with matches from the community, by the way – can make long-term plans for capital improvements to address these needs.

Libraries recognize the state’s fiscal situation this year. Although the total needs of libraries far exceed the \$8 million system aid and the \$14 million construction aid, we are

only asking that those two items to be included in the Governor's budget so that we can effectively continue the work we have started.

I am hopeful that you will recognize the merit of maintaining Library Aid and Construction Aid at 2007-08 levels and making those funding levels permanent.

I appreciate your time and your consideration of our position.