

March 12, 2008

Representative Aldo Vagnozzi
Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittees
S 0886 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative Vagnozzi;

During the testimony of Nancy Robertson, State Librarian, on March 5, 2008, there were several statements made that I cannot agree with.

Most of the cooperatives are doing very well – providing services in a cost-effective manner to the member libraries. Currently, \$3,000,000 for cooperative support equals about thirty cents per capita to provide the networking, advocacy, technology support, assistance with state-wide initiatives, consulting, advanced resource sharing and more to the members across Michigan.

Ms Robertson said that there is no accountability for how State Aid is used by the Michigan Library Cooperatives. This is an incorrect statement. Enclosed is a copy of the current “Guidelines” from the “State Aid Guidelines for Michigan Libraries”. It is very clear what the cooperative responsibilities are vis-à-vis the Department of HAL/Library of Michigan (as required by State guidelines).

- Each Library Cooperative (there are now 12) must have a Plan of Service and each Cooperative Board must have Bylaws. Both of these documents are approved, and sometimes tweaked, by the library of Michigan.
- Each cooperative has a technology plan of service approved by the Library of Michigan.
- There is an annual audit conducted. A copy of this audit is sent to the Library of Michigan and to the Department of Treasury.
- The Cooperative Directors meet every other month at the Library of Michigan. Library of Michigan staff, including the State Librarian, attend the meetings. For over two years, the Cooperative Directors have been requesting joint meetings with the Library of Michigan to create state-wide plans for service.
- Formerly, the Library of Michigan had staff liaisons with each cooperative. This staff member would attend cooperative board meetings and report back to the State Librarian. This program was discontinued under the former State Librarian.
- The most important accountability that all cooperatives have is to the membership of the cooperative. All cooperatives have local boards; they have advisory committees consisting of the membership. Both bodies approve the annual budget and make recommendations. Both bodies participate in writing the plan of service.

Both the membership and Board of the Mid-Michigan Library League feel it is of utmost importance to maintain this local accountability of the Cooperative.

Additionally, the new model for cooperative services that has been presented will damage services to most of the smaller and rural libraries in Michigan. Small/rural libraries make up two thirds of the libraries in the State.

These libraries depend on their cooperative for many services besides inter-library loan of materials. If the overhead costs of the cooperatives are not paid by State Aid, the fees charged would have to pay for them. That means many libraries simply would not ask for help. They will be left to flounder with whatever resources they can find.

If you read the State Librarian's blog

(<https://www.blogger.com/comment.g?blogID=27134006&postID=2080621403663270834>) you will find few comments in support of the new model.

To be sure, there are different levels of service in the 12 cooperatives across the State. That is to be expected. This is a very varied state and regional differences must be taken into account when deciding which services are offered. It is the membership of the cooperative that makes this decision. The new model shifts that decision to the Library of Michigan; which, as you know, is very understaffed and is not able to provide services across the State. Neither does its staff have the experience of working in small or rural libraries.

We understand the need to consolidate cooperatives and services. We just do not feel that the proposed model is an effective way to serve the majority of libraries in Michigan.

If changes are made to PA89, we strongly urge you to put into the legislation the following items:

- maintain the statement from PA397.575 Sec (2) It is the intent of the legislature that money available in subsection (1) be used solely for assistance to public libraries or cooperative libraries and not for the administrative expenses of the library of Michigan or the department of history, arts, and libraries. Library of Michigan must not control local expenditures.
- it is imperative that any distribution formula be stated in legislation.
- include library cooperatives as local, governmental entities.
- include what constitutes a cooperative (population, geographic requirements, etc.).
- include State Aid funding for local libraries and cooperatives at a rate tied to inflation.
- provide funding at a level that will pay overhead costs to operate a cooperative.
- make consolidation easier for cooperatives - legislation should allow cooperatives to merge.
- require libraries and cooperatives to meet basic standards for library service, including certified personnel and hours open, as is the case now, before being allowed to join a cooperative or to receive State Aid.
- look to the future and determine what services may be needed by public libraries rather than pass legislation that simply re-arranges the current status quo.
- continue a local board to oversee cooperative operations rather than shift responsibility to the State. (Memberships in most of the cooperatives have reinforced this statement).
- include that cooperative headquarters should be separate from any member library.
- require K-12 and higher education funds to pay their share of the shared databases.
- allow membership in a cooperative to be optional.

We strongly urge that an outside study be done to determine the needs of Michigan libraries and how best to meet them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Insert name

CC:

Representative Fran Amos
N0892 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Representative Bill Caul
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Representative Shanelle Jackson
S0688 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Representative Goeff Hansen
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Elaine M. Logan, Chair
Library of Michigan Board of Trustees
Eastern Michigan University
Bruce T. Halle Library
955 W. Circle Dr.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Representative David Palsrok
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Senator: Gerald VanWoerkom
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Representative Darwin Booher
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Senator: Jason Allen
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Representative Joel Sheltrown
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Senator: Alan Cropsey
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Representative Howard Walker
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Senator: Michelle McManus
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909