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Good morning. My name is Dr. Colleen Sadowski and I am the Director of the Rochester City School Library System, and a member of the School Library Systems Association. I am also a past Chairperson of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries. Thank you Chairman Ryan, and committee members for this opportunity to speak with you today.

2020 has brought many changes to our world, impacting every last one of us. School librarians provide in-person programming such as Information Literacy lessons, digital citizenship and civics, makerspaces, and professional development workshops. All of a sudden last spring we were all learning from home – students and adults. The last eight months have definitely been a learning experience for ALL.

When we were thrust into Pandemic Mode last March, School Librarians rose to the occasion. In Rochester City Schools our librarians immediately implemented a virtual Ask a Librarian Zoom room. Ask a Librarian was available every day for staff, students, and their families. School Librarians fielded all sorts of queries. They helped people in our community find and use eBooks (because for many of our patrons, this was their first time reading an eBook), access databases and periodicals, navigate to virtual classrooms, log in to District resources, and resolved ChromeBook issues. They showed callers how to find reliable sources of information, Ask a Librarian was so valuable to our community that Rochester City School District Librarians continue to host it daily. They are offering hours before and after school as well as throughout the day.

Thanks to the New York City School Library System, School Librarians everywhere have a Translation of Practice document they can refer to. You are probably wondering what a “Translation of Practice” is. This Translation of Practice was built on the NYSED’s School Library Media Program Rubric and is a tool that guides librarians in pivoting their program from in-person instruction to remote. In addition, the NYC School Library System increased their professional learning opportunities to help meet the increased needs of teachers to effectively deliver instruction virtually and develop safe virtual sites for at risk student populations.

Librarians continue to curate digital collections, make materials readily available for students, their families, and school staff. These resources include eBooks, digital audio books, databases, and vetted electronic resources. It is important to note during the first few months of the pandemic, classroom teachers were lost without access to their print collections. Librarians stepped up to help classroom teachers access digital content partnering with public libraries to vet and curate materials keeping in mind copyright and accessibility. The NYC School Library

System also curated a free collection of eBooks about Covid-19. Today, the collection has been accessed over 95,000 times since March 2020.

Meeting an author in person is an amazing experience, but author visits via Zoom are great too! And how about those virtual field trips? Or Historically Black College and University virtual visits? The creativity of a School Librarian has no boundaries, and at this time has really expanded the opportunities available to us all.

While we are a creative bunch, we need funding to accomplish our goals. School Library Systems around the state have experienced cuts. We not only have cuts in certified librarians serving our schools, but cuts to our School Library System funding. So far Systems have received 80% of their funding. That means 20% less in services to our communities. That's even before we take into consideration the increased costs all around, which already reduced our spending power. School Library Systems provide services to all the school libraries in their area. These funding cuts impact our children, their families and our staff through the resources and services we provide.

What are they missing? With the absence of a certified School Librarian in every school, students are missing instruction in critical skills areas such as multiple literacies (visual, media), digital literacy, technology skills, evaluation of perspective, digital citizenship, and design thinking. The decrease in funding has resulted in fewer digital resources such as eBooks, periodicals, and databases, as well as reduced access to equipment and technology. Some systems have had to cut online encyclopedia subscriptions, for example CultureGrams or WorldBook online. We have all experienced being priced out of the digital eBook market. At a time when students are learning in virtual environments where disinformation is prevalent, the need for reliable, vetted, updated, digital resources is greater than ever before.

I would like to thank all of the committee members for your time today. I truly appreciate the opportunity to talk about our accomplishments as well as our struggles. Thank you.

Additional Information:

- Library materials aid reimbursement has remained \$6.25 since 2006. When the average price of a hardcover book is \$25, we can purchase one new book for every 4th student. eBook pricing is out of control. We have seen eBook prices in some instances quadruple in a matter of weeks.
- We have over 1.5 million students in NY that don't have access to a school librarian and do not have a public library nearby.
- There is a shortage of teachers including school librarians recognized by the US Department of Education.
- School Library System Directors propose an alternative pathway to certification for these situations:
 - A pathway for people that already have a Master's degree in library
 - A pathway for certified teachers
 - A temporary certification for individuals working on their library degrees

- Technology needs continue to grow for all system types. Our communities rely on libraries for access and education.
- Libraries provide career-counseling opportunities.
- Libraries provide Internet access to the community.
- School libraries provide equity. If every student in NYS had access to a school library taught by an effective and qualified school librarian, our students would not only have more opportunities, they would have a better chance at being college and career ready, and prepared to meet their civics responsibilities and participate in a democratic society.