

Thank you for your time today. My name is Erica Charis-Molling, the Director of Campus Library Services for CT State Community College Asnuntuck. At my campus, we serve a diverse array of students, including first-generation students, veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals, low-income students, single parents, older adults, and students with disabilities. The current budget deficit has significantly impacted our ability to support these students.

Due to funding cuts, my library experienced a 20% reduction in staff, resulting in limited resources and services. We had to close evening and weekend hours, depriving students of essential resources like study spaces, computer workstations, and library staff support. Even the hours we are open (9-4:30/5:30 most weekdays) are precarious, susceptible to disruption by a single person's illness, appointment, or leave time.

This has created challenges for students who rely on the library for academic assistance and technology access. The library facilitates crucial technology access through a technology loaner program. We've had repeated situations where students have been unable to pick up a loaner laptop or graphing calculator during the library's greatly reduced hours of operation. In a few cases this has forced the student to drop out of the course.

Library staff also provide invaluable classroom support for research skill development. Even with myself as the Director teaching over half of the class visits, we are unable to adequately support our daytime classes and we're completely unable to support any evening or weekend courses.

Additionally, the library's operating budget faced a 73% cut, leading to the discontinuation of all journal and magazine subscriptions. We have also been unable to purchase any textbooks, to support students unable to afford these expensive and crucial books on their own. This lack of resources has hindered students' access to educational materials.

Despite our best efforts, the library's reduced hours and limited budget have impacted student success and academic achievement. It is crucial for policymakers to address these funding challenges to ensure that all students have equal access to the resources and support services necessary for their academic success.

Our students have worked incredibly hard to overcome a host of adversities just to get through the door of higher education. They shouldn't have to overcome more barriers to be successful in completing the education they've paid for.