

Wisconsin Library Association member testimony – April 26, 2023 Joint Finance Committee public hearing



Photo courtesy of Representative Rob Swearingen.

Kris Adams Wendt, Wisconsin Valley Library Service

Good morning, Senator Marklein, Representative Born and committee members!

HAPPY NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK!

I am Kris Adams Wendt – a constituent of Senator Felzkowski and Representative Swearingen – two wonderful library champions!

We who are literally standing up for libraries today represent the Wisconsin Library Association, whose members have met with you at the capitol in recent months.

We are library trustees and librarians from 3 of the 15 regional public library systems that provide cost-efficient infrastructure for Wisconsin's 381 public libraries.

The Wisconsin Valley, Northern Waters, and Nicolet Federated Library Systems support nearly 1 million people in 23 counties across northern Wisconsin. Most of our member libraries are in smaller towns and villages where they help individuals and communities stay healthy, connected, productive and well informed.

We proudly hold up our library cards, to say THANK YOU for your past support of state library aid and ask for your continued support in the next budget.

Dominic Frandrup, Door County Library Director

Good morning,

My name is Dominic Frandrup. I am currently Director of Door County libraries, but Senator Felzkowski knows me from my previous role as Director for Langlade County libraries.

Thanks to your support for state aid to Wisconsin's fifteen regional public library systems, local libraries share economies of scale necessary to provide fiscally responsible core services, while offering unique services to

everyone who walks through our doors. This is particularly important for smaller libraries in high tourism areas like Door County and Minocqua.

Door County libraries serve a diverse resident population of 30,000, where over one third of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch and the ADRC serves nearly 500 daily meals to seniors. At the same time, our county welcomes well over a million annual visitors from around Wisconsin and the world. Nearly all Door County residents, and many of our visitors, have a library card at one of our eight locations.

Here's why: Businesswoman "Susan" has been coming to Door County for decades and can extend her stays from weekends to weeks despite broadband being unavailable at any price at her seasonal residence because our libraries offer free 24/7 Wi-Fi service to have remote meetings with her employees.

Door County businesses promote the quality and variety of library services for young families to new hires. Attendance of children and their parents at Pre-K story times this year has nearly doubled our pre- pandemic 2019 numbers.

All eight Door County libraries offer residents and visitors access to our free meeting spaces; from state representatives holding listening sessions with their constituents; to the 400 plus Door County organizations that gather to plan the next community event.

Thank you for your time and your continued support of our Wisconsin libraries.

Kristie Hauer, Shawano County Library Director

My name is Kristie Hauer. I am the director of Shawano County Library. It is a pleasure to be here today to express continued support for Wisconsin's regional library systems.

Today's libraries are no longer the quiet libraries of yesterday. Instead, they are vibrant community centers, focusing on lifelong learning through outreach, career support, literacy, and community engagement.

Still today, there remain countless barriers to accessing library services. Our library systems have successfully laid an infrastructure to support public libraries with these challenges.

Nicolet Federated Library System offers a critical delivery service among the libraries in its area. Items are transported among libraries which allows patrons to receive materials more easily and quickly, saving them time, expense, and travel.

In tandem with this, Shawano Library offers a delivery service to homebound individuals and local organizations, serving those that cannot easily reach a physical library. Recently, a librarian was handling a routine delivery where he found a homebound patron in severe distress, needing medical attention, but unable to help herself. We, the librarians, organized help and shortly thereafter received an update from the patron sharing she was "so much better - thank you so much!"

Librarians matter so much in today's world.

I respectfully ask for continued state aid at the level requested by the Wisconsin Library Association in support of Wisconsin public library systems. Robust regional system support makes it possible for local librarians like me to continue to build on the good work of decades past and forge a new and innovative path to the future.

Thank you!