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### Supporting SB 66

I am a co-director at the Grantsburg Public Library, which is one of the 27 libraries that the Northern Waters Library System serves. We depend on Northern Waters for support, leadership, and guidance.

Several years ago, the state agreed to fund library systems at a set percentage of the previous year's local public libraries expenditures. However, the state has never fully funded its commitment to the public library systems. System services have been forced to maintain at inadequate funding levels. Despite this fact, they continue to pursue the needs of the citizens of Wisconsin and attempt to meet those needs with the same high caliber. Over the last 10 years, Northern Waters Library System has received the 15<sup>th</sup> lowest percentage increase of the seventeen library systems in our state. With Governor Thompson's proposed budget, Northern Water's will experience a decrease of .1% for the next two years. They have been forced into the position of having to decrease services and staff.

Providing support for public library systems correlates with Wisconsin's commitment to technology. Automation is a growing necessity for a small library to survive in the near future. Our library could never have afforded, or supported for that matter, a shared automated system on the same level that Northern Waters has offered our library. This system will basically eliminate the barriers of our limited inventory. I just heard of an 82 year old retired professor who had recently purchased a computer and was having access to the Internet set up for him. Technology is no longer unobtainable and is reaching people we would never expect. Now that this 82 year old man has access to the Internet, from his home he could request a book from any library to be mailed to him. This is lifelong learning at it's best. This service is due to Northern Waters hard work of keeping on top of the needs of all of the residents in our state.

I fear the results of the proposed budget will eventually cripple Northern Waters, which would in turn affect every public library it serves and every citizen that benefits from that library. Increased funding to public library systems will serve all citizens in our state and help in promoting life long learning. I urge you to do anything you can to help increase aid and fulfill the state's funding commitment to public library systems. Thank you for your time and consideration of this issue.