



City of Winooski
Vermont's Opportunity City

27 West Allen Street
Winooski Vermont 05404
802 655 6410
winooski.vt.gov

January 27, 2023

Please accept the following testimony as related to Inclusive Services and Access to Public Programs and Services.

To the Working Group for the Status of Libraries,

The Winooski Memorial Library celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusion and welcomes the rich tapestry of experience and background among all members of the Winooski community. As the most racially and ethnically diverse city in Vermont - with nearly 15% of residents born outside of the United States and over 20 different languages spoken within our schools – the library serves a unique role as both connector and service provider for our new American, immigrant, and refugee populations.

We offer a number of programs in support of English language learners, including weekly ELL classes and technology assistance in partnership with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, as well as other programs that work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within our community. These include, or have included, Restorative Justice Circles in partnership with Spectrum Youth and Services, Arabic language learning classes and monthly bilingual storytimes, free veggie and produce distribution to address food insecurity in partnership with Interval Center, and weekly storytime visits to the Thrive Afterschool and Summer Program, a 3-STAR licensed childcare provider and enrichment program here in Winooski.

The library also provides a welcoming and inclusive space for community members and offers access to a diverse collection of print materials and online resources, translated vital documents such as library card applications (Arabic, Burmese, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili),

after-hours space availability for community members to host meetings, and a dedicated staff committed to promoting open and equal access for all. Most recently, Kirsten Wilson, Youth Services Coordinator, has enrolled in a Swahili course in an effort to reduce language barriers among non-English speaking patrons.

And while providing these diverse programs and services is a great strength, the library also faces considerable challenges presented by space constraints, limited shelving and storage, and the number of individuals on staff. We are a small but mighty team of 2.5 FTE working in ~2000 SF of open floor plan and without access to separate meeting rooms, in-house storage, or office space - all of which make scaling to meet larger community needs and demands difficult. In comparison to other Vermont libraries serving similar size communities (population 5000+), we rank last in square footage of library space (2000 SF), square footage per capita (.27), total collection holdings (10,406), and second to last in paid staff hours per week (73), according to FY2021 annual reporting statistics compiled by the Vermont Department of Libraries.

These challenges are not new, but they do limit the full potential and position of the library within the Winooski community. It is my hope that as we continue to grow our programs and services, we can at the same time direct and allocate the needed resources and funding that will allow us to scale in both space and staff and maintain a welcoming and inclusive spirit for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Nate Eddy
Director, Winooski Memorial Library