Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We write to urge your support for the education, workforce, and economic development needs of Americans by providing $206.4 million, an $11 million increase from the current level, for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in the fiscal year 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. This amount is necessary to implement changes included in the 2018 Museum and Library Services Act, which passed with strong bipartisan backing.

Libraries serve a vital role in our communities, offering free access to essential information on a wide range of topics, skills and career training, and computing services. According to an American Library Association (ALA) survey, nearly100 percent of public libraries reported offering free Internet access. In rural areas, more than 83 percent of libraries report they serve as their community's only provider of free Internet and computing services. At a time when applications for many jobs and government services must be filled out online, 90 percent of public libraries offer technology training, and 76 percent help people use e-government resources. And, with the 2020 census going paperless, libraries are working to assist patrons in responding online.

Libraries, however, provide more than just Internet access. According to another ALA report, more than 92 percent of public libraries offer services that help patrons prepare resumes and conduct job searches. Libraries help entrepreneurs innovate with 3-D printers and makerspaces and create business plans and growth strategies through access to specialized collections for small businesses. They also provide tailored assistance such as services to veterans to help them access earned benefits and acquire the tools to re-integrate back into civilian life. Moreover, libraries expose children to books and information to help them gain and enhance their literacy skills. Numerous surveys show that many of our nation's children living in poverty have minimal access to books at home. These children depend on their local libraries' story-time and summer reading programs to help them prepare to learn in school and succeed.

Unfortunately, during this time of increased demand, many libraries continue to face cuts and severe budget pressures, leading to closures, reduced hours, and/or staff reductions. LSTA is the only federal program that helps public libraries meet community needs, provide enhanced services through technology, reach underserved populations, and retain librarians while

recruiting new entrants to this vital field. Consisting of a state formula program, which is amplified by a state match, and competitive grants, LSTA is more essential now than ever. With the recently enacted Museum and Library Services Act, Congress strengthened LSTA to support data driven tools to tailor services to address and meet community needs, help libraries prepare for and provide services after a disaster or emergency, enhance services for Native Americans, and recruit and train library and information science professionals from a broad range of backgrounds. The new law also enables increases in the Grants to States program to be shared more broadly across states, while ensuring no state loses funding.

We greatly appreciate the strong support for LSTA provided by this Subcommittee in recent years, including the $195.4 million appropriated in FY 2020. Increasing funding for LSTA, especially by providing a boost of $11 million for the Grants to States program, will help ensure that Americans of all ages have access to libraries, Internet, and information services; the resources they need to develop literacy skills and achieve academically; and the services and tools to search for, find, and create jobs.

Thank you for your attention to this request and your continued support in sustaining and strengthening our nation's libraries.

Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva   Don Young

Library Services and Technology Act, FY2021
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March 13, 2020

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