

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

We appreciate your past support for libraries by providing funding increases for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and urge you to continue this trend in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Your support helps ensure libraries have the resources to maintain vital services, and we urge the Subcommittee to continue its support for community libraries by providing additional federal resources.

Libraries have always played a vital role in our communities; they offer 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 ([2022](#)), nearly 100 percent of public libraries reported offering free Internet access. In rural areas, more than 83 percent of libraries reported serving as their community's only provider of free Internet and computing services (*The Last Mile*, American Libraries, 2022). At a time when applications for many jobs and government services must be completed online, 90 percent of public libraries offer technology training, and 76 percent offer assistance navigating digital government resources.

Libraries, however, provide more than just Internet access: according to another ALA report ([2019](#)), nearly all public libraries offer services which help patrons prepare resumes and conduct job searches. Libraries offer 3-D printers and makerspaces to help entrepreneurial designers innovate, and they provide access to specialized collections for small businesses. They also provide tailored assistance to help individuals, such as veterans, access earned benefits and acquire the tools to re-integrate back into civilian life.

Moreover, libraries expose children to books, digital resources, and information to help them gain and enhance their literacy skills. Numerous surveys ([McQuillan, 1998](#)) show that many of our nation's children living in poverty have very limited 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 ([Roman & Fiore, 2010](#)).


Unfortunately, during this time of increased demand, many libraries continue to face increased cuts and severe budget pressures. COVID-19 has exacerbated budget constraints as libraries

absorb unbudgeted costs to ensure library facilities are safe and clean environments for patrons. LSTA is more essential now than ever; it is the only federal program which helps public libraries meet community needs by providing enhanced services through technology, reach underserved populations, and retain staff while recruiting new and diverse future librarians.

We greatly appreciate the strong support for LSTA provided by this Subcommittee in recent years, including the \$197.4 million appropriated in FY 2022. Increasing funding for LSTA in FY 2023 will help ensure that Americans of all ages have access to Internet, information services, academic and employment resources at public libraries (LSTA was reauthorized at \$232 million in 2018). We encourage the Subcommittee to continue to address the ongoing needs of libraries through increasing regular annual funding.

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


Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



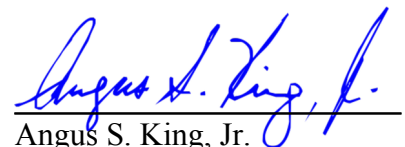
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Catherine Cortez Masto
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Cory A. Booker
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Kirsten Gillibrand
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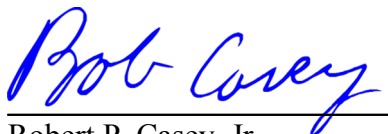
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Dianne Feinstein
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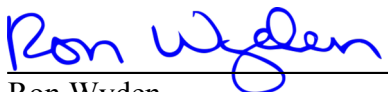
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



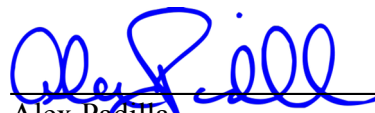
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Margaret Wood Hassan
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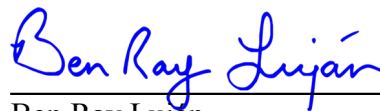
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



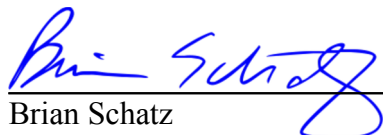
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



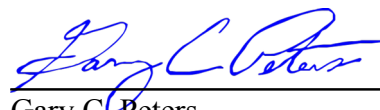
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



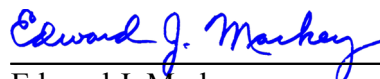
John Hickenlooper
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Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



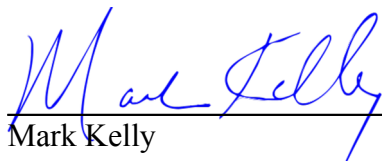
Sheldon Whitehouse
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