

ALA American Library Association

American Library Association and American Association of School Librarians Endorse Washington SB 5102

The American Library Association (ALA) and American Association of School Librarians (AASL) applaud the introduction of SB 5102 and urge its passage by the Washington legislature.

Washington's administrative code RCW 28A. 320.240 establishes quality criteria for school library programs that support student learning goals and state standards.¹ It also identifies integrating information literacy, critical thinking, digital citizenship, and technology skills instruction across the curriculum, as well as promoting a community-wide culture of reading, as key responsibilities of certified school librarians. As schools' only certified information professionals, school librarians are uniquely qualified to ensure that these critical skills and dispositions are taught.

Washington's legislature has made a commendable commitment to ensuring that schools across the state receive and allocate funding so that every child has access to fundamental educational services. Yet loopholes remain in state legislation that prevent the realization of that promise and exacerbate inequity, particularly with regard to information literacy. Data shows that Washington has seen a significant decrease in appropriately staffed school libraries² since 2010 and ranks in the bottom third of states for student-to-librarian full time equivalent ratios.³ Furthermore, disproportionate impact has been on students in districts that are predominantly rural, poor, or in communities of color.

Numerous studies show that student achievement—from reading scores and digital proficiency to graduation rates and college preparedness—is higher in schools with professionally staffed libraries.⁴ Those findings are no accident. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*⁵ is the framework upon which school librarians provide equitable access to resources and embed information literacy across the curriculum for authentic, inquiry-based, personalized learning experiences. The framework aligns with content area and technology standards and facilitates students' examination of diverse perspectives and experiences; collaboration towards individual and common goals; curation of resources for personal and academic growth; reflective practices that nurture exploration and innovation; and capable and ethical use of information technologies.

¹ <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.320.240>

² https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/advocacy/statements/docs/AASL_Appropriate_Staffing.pdf

³ <https://libslide.org/data-tools/state-profile/>

⁴ <https://kappanonline.org/lance-kachel-school-librarians-matter-years-research/>;
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0099133322000829>

⁵ <https://standards.aasl.org/>

All students today must skillfully navigate a complex information landscape to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in society. SB 5102 closes the loophole that denies many Washington students a community-wide culture of reading, as well as information literacy, critical thinking, digital citizenship, and technology skills instruction, while delivering them to others. It advances the state legislature closer to fulfilling its promise, not just to Washington's children but to all Washingtonians and to the state's educational, economic, and civic future.

On behalf of our members in Washington, as well as the students and communities they serve, we therefore urge passage of SB 5102.

Signed:



Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, President
American Library Association



Katherine M. Lester, President
American Association of School Librarians