April 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

We write to urge your support for the education, workforce, and economic development needs of Americans by providing no less than the FY 2014 funding level for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in the FY 2015 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Libraries serve a unique and important role by providing free access to all types of information, skills training, and computing services. The demand for such services has grown in concert with the need to apply online for many jobs and government services especially as Americans have been increasingly unable to afford broadband in their homes. Indeed, even as the economy shows signs of improvement, patrons continue to turn to their local library for assistance and access to essential information on a wide range of topics.

Every day, libraries across the country provide no-fee public access to computers and the Internet in some of our most distressed communities. According to a recent American Library Association (ALA) report, 65 percent of all libraries nationwide say they are the only provider of free Internet access in their communities. In rural areas, public libraries are even more critical, with 73 percent reporting they serve as their community’s only free Internet provider.

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 complete online job applications, create resumes, and access job databases and searches. Libraries also provide resources and specialized collections for small businesses, which help create business plans and develop new growth strategies.

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 no 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, library budgets all across the country are being drastically cut, leading many to close or reduce hours.

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 important field. Robust federal support for the
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state formula program and competitive grants provided by LSTA is more essential now than ever.

We urge you to provide no less than the FY 2014 funding level for LSTA in order to 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 continued support in sustaining and strengthening our nation’s libraries.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Jack Reed
Emanuel Cleaver
Bill Sanders
Carl Levin
Patrick Leahy
Chris Coons
Susan Collins
August King
Ben Cardin
Ron Wyden
Edward J. Markey
Kirsten Gillibrand
Sheldon Whitehouse

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Michael Oehmer Rep

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