

ALA American Library Association

December 2, 2015

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA), I am writing in strong support of S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act. We are encouraged by your efforts to complete reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and are optimistic that improvements contained under S. 1177 that include effective school library programs will help ensure that all students graduating from America's schools will be adequately prepared for college and success in the workforce.

As poverty rates across America remain high, our schools must serve as an "equalizer" that provides all students with access to the resources and instruction they need to succeed academically and become productive and engaged citizens. Effective school library programs are a wise investment, but in too many schools across the nation, school library budgets and school librarian positions are being cut. This puts our children's education and workforce readiness at peril.

In addition, recent data¹ available from the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) highlights the lack of support for too many of our students in thousands of schools across the country. NCES data reveals that approximately 8,830 public schools across the nation do not have a school library and for those schools that do have a library, nearly 17,000 schools do not have a full or part-time state-certified school librarian on staff.

ALA has been disheartened by this lack of support for effective school library programs and comprehensive literacy instruction at the federal, state, and local levels because schools with effective school library programs ensure their students have the best chance to succeed.

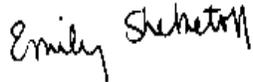
Accordingly, ALA is encouraged that multiple provisions included as part of S. 1177 would support effective school library programs:

¹ For additional information on NCES 2011-2012 data, see http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables_list.asp#2012.

- Title II, Part B, Subpart 2, Section 2226 continues activities currently implemented through appropriations legislation and authorizes Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) that would promote literacy programs in low income communities. Funds are authorized for the development and enhancement of effective school library programs, which may include providing professional development for school librarians, books, and up-to-date materials to high need schools.
- Title I LEA Plan includes a description of how the LEA will assist schools in developing effective school library programs to provide students an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills and improve academic achievement.
- Authorizes state and local uses of funds under Title II, Part A (Supporting Effective Instruction) for “supporting the instructional services provided by effective school library programs.”
- Uses of funds under Title II, Part B, Subpart 2 (Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation) include coordination with, and professional development for school librarians.
- Eligible entities under Title II, Part B, Subpart 2, Section 2232 (Presidential and Congressional Academies for American History and Civics) include libraries.
- Authorizes states to use funds to assist LEAs with identifying and addressing technology readiness needs, including Internet connectivity and access to school libraries under Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants).

Thanks again for ensuring that effective school library programs were included as part of S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act. ALA is pleased to support this critical legislation.

Sincerely,



Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director
Washington Office, American Library Association