June 9, 2023

Mr. Paul M. Brenton
Board of Education Members
Plainfield Public Schools
651 Norwich Road
Plainfield, CT 06374

Dear Superintendent Brenton, Chair Haskell, and Board Members:

Today, more than ever, students must learn to navigate an increasingly complex information landscape to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in the community. And so, we urge the Plainfield Public School District to reconsider its proposal to eliminate the high school librarian position—the district’s only certified information professional staffing a district library—and prioritize funding so that Plainfield Public Schools have access to a full-time certified school librarian at their high school.

The research indicates that every school should be staffed with a certified school librarian.¹ We recognize that budget challenges require districts to make difficult decisions. We commend the PPS Board of Education for thoughtfully considering information related to the positive impact school libraries have on student learning.

Building a continuum of literacy and inquiry skills while nurturing the whole child is foundational to school librarianship, and it is central to success for learners in school and beyond. More than 60 studies from across the country conclude that student achievement—from reading scores and digital proficiency to graduation rates and post-secondary success—is higher in schools with professionally staffed libraries.²

These findings are no accident. School librarians are the heart of their schools and central to their district’s goals in providing effective service. They are why the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted³ National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,⁴ the framework upon which those skills and dispositions are built. The framework aligns with content area and technology standards and facilitates students’ engagement in authentic learning; curation of resources for personal and academic growth; collaboration towards individual and common goals; examination of diverse perspectives and

² https://kappanonline.org/lance-kachel-school-librarians-matter-years-research/
⁴ https://standards.aasl.org/
experiences; reflective practices that foster exploration and innovation; and capable and ethical use of information technologies.

A school librarian impacts every learner, fostering a culture of reading and inquiry that reflects the needs and interests of every member of the community. They collaborate on planning, instruction, and assessment with teachers and embed literacy and inquiry across the curriculum—vital for navigating a world full of misinformation and disinformation. And they offer supplemental programming that extends learning beyond the classroom.

Plainfield Public Schools is rightly proud of its commitment to excellence and work in fostering intellectual curiosity, creativity, and positive attitudes required for lifelong learning. The proposed cuts undermine that commitment and diminish the district’s ability to realize its mission. As presidents of the American Library Association and American Association for School Librarians, we respectfully ask the Board to fulfill its commitment to the families of Plainfield and retain the position and continue to build a learning community where students are guided on a successful path to meet their full potential in becoming responsible, productive citizens of their community.

Sincerely,

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

Katherine M. Lester, President
American Association of School Librarians

cc: Melissa Thom, President, Connecticut Association of School Librarians
Douglas Lord, President, Connecticut Library Association