Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We appreciate your past support for libraries by providing funding increases for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and urge you to provide at least $206.4 million 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.

Librarians continue to serve as a vital source of trusted information regarding COVID-19 and vaccines. Librarians are helping residents register for vaccines and obtain testing kits, including seniors and other at-risk residents. Libraries offer one-stop access to local, state, and federal public health resources, homework assistance, career, and employment services, and help with emergency assistance applications. Many residents, employees and students in rural areas rely on libraries as the only resource for hotspots, tablets, and related assistance to those who lack Internet access at home.

Libraries play 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, 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. At a time when applications for many jobs and government services must be completed online, nearly 90 percent of public libraries offer technology training, and 76 percent assistance navigating digital government resources.

Libraries, however, provide more than just Internet access: according to another ALA report, 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. Surveys 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.
Unfortunately, with growing demand for services, libraries continue to face increased cuts and severe budget pressures. 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 2021 and FY 2022 and urge the committee to provide at least $206.4 million in FY 2023. 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. We encourage the Subcommittee to continue to address the ongoing needs of libraries through increasing regular annual funding.

Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Peter Meijer
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

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