

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your leadership in delivering the bipartisan \$8.3 billion emergency funding package and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to address the impacts of COVID-19. As both chambers work diligently on additional measures to mitigate the severe disruptions caused by this virus, we ask that you prioritize funding and support for our libraries and the vital digital resources they provide to Americans across the country. **We are asking for at least \$2 billion for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, including \$175 million for additional digital content and \$160 million for hot spot lending.**

Access to digital resources have become critically important to all Americans in this unprecedented time of social distancing. While we work to address the needs of the American people, we should turn to our libraries who have been successfully delivering digital resources to communities across our nation since long before the current crisis. There are more than 9,057 public library systems and nearly 98,460 school libraries that offer e-books and audiobooks and much more in terms of digital resources. Many libraries serve students and their parents through access to education and tutoring sites for homework help, which will be especially important while schools remain closed. Many libraries also have hotspot lending programs to underserved families and students who do not have access to the internet at home. Some libraries are even streaming “story times” and author visits to encourage young children and adult learners to keep reading in their homes. They also offer access to skill-sharing sites and online resume building for those who have been recently unemployed, and access to telehealth resources and trusted sources for public health information.

These digital resources could be easily scaled up to serve more Americans through increased funding for the Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States program which is one program among the Institute of Museum and Library services account. This program has

supported the delivery of these services in the U.S. for more than 50 years to meet the needs of children, parents, teenagers, adult learners, senior citizens, the unemployed, and the business community. This well-established program offers an expedient pathway to allow states to scale up available digital resources and the existing digital infrastructure during this uncertain time.

As more and more libraries take the necessary step to safeguard their employees and our communities by closing their doors to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, we should continue to support them and afford Americans better access to the plethora of online resources libraries have to offer. We thank you for your commitment to our public libraries and your consideration of our request as you craft the next coronavirus response measure.

Sincerely,

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Tom Cole
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
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Joe Neguse
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Rául M. Grijalva
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Eleanor Norton Holmes
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Mark Pocan
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Jamie Raskin
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Tim Ryan
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Jan Schakowsky
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Elissa Slotkin
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Haley M. Stevens
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Mark Takano
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Rashida Tlaib
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Peter Welch
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Don Young
Member of Congress