

ALA American Library Association

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20301

April 4, 2020

Dear Secretary DeVos,

Thank you for your leadership and continued work on COVID-19 relief efforts. As you implement the CARES Act, we ask that you underscore the importance of funding for school, academic, and public libraries and the vital connections and opportunities they provide to Americans across the country.

Access to digital resources has become critically important to all Americans in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak and libraries have stepped up to successfully deliver these resources to communities in need throughout our state. However, libraries, like other public and private institutions, are fulfilling community needs while anticipating lost revenue.

School and academic libraries are essential learning resources and librarians are essential guides inside our schools and institutions of higher education, leading everyday teaching and learning towards methods and outcomes that best prepare our students for the challenges of the 21st century.

While buildings are closing and education institutions transition to remote learning, libraries are on the forefront of digital equity by supporting home broadband access, loaning devices and offering technical support. Many libraries have hotspot lending programs for underserved families and students who do not have internet access at home. School, academic and public libraries offer e-books, audiobooks, online learning, and tutoring sites for homework help, which are especially important while school buildings remain closed. School and academic librarians are helping their institutions pivot to remote learning, with digitization of instructional material and coordination of online instructional tools. Libraries are streaming story times, book discussions, and author visits to engage readers of all ages. They also offer access to skill-building sites and online resume development for those who have been recently unemployed, as well as access to telehealth resources and curated, trustworthy public health information. Some

libraries have even converted into emergency childcare centers for children and parents impacted by COVID-19.

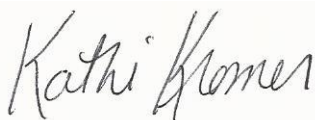
It is important to point out that school and academic libraries contribute to a range of programs within the jurisdiction of the Department of Education and often administered by the states and territories. Examples include: supporting technological needs and academic support of students under the Title IV-A of ESSA; providing targeted literacy training and materials to young students in high-poverty communities under the Innovative Approaches to Literacy; implementing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 Career and Technical Education State Grants; supporting the advancement of literacy skills through Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants; and hiring college students participating in Federal Work Study Programs.

The Governor's Emergency Relief Fund under Sec. 18002 of the CARES Act, allows governors to use relief funds to provide emergency support to local educational agencies, institutions of higher education as well as to any other "education related entity" within the state that the governor deems essential for carrying out emergency educational services as described in section 18003(d)(1) of this title or the Higher Education Act, the provision of child care and early childhood education, social and emotional support, and the protection of education-related jobs.

We urge you to note that "other education related entity" includes libraries. By dedicating a portion of this funding to libraries, they will be better able to have the critical resources necessary to not only continue the relief efforts underway, but importantly to scale up these efforts in the coming months and foster community resilience as we emerge from this crisis.

We thank you for your commitment to libraries and for your consideration of our request as you begin implementation of the CARES Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathi Kromer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Kathi Kromer
Associate Executive Director
American Library Association