April 25, 2016

Dear Governor McCrory, Senator Berger, Speaker Moore and Members of the General Assembly,

We the members of the Executive Board of the North Carolina Library Association write with concern in regard to House Bill 2 (HB2) the “Public Facilities Privacy and Securities Act.” We believe that libraries are democratic institutions that serve all citizens, including those who may identify as LGBTQI and we fear that HB2 may interfere with our service to those North Carolinians. In fact, the Library Bill of Rights ensures that all materials, resources, and services are made available without discrimination. Libraries, in general, have been safe spaces for all.

North Carolina is very fortunate to have five graduate schools of library and information science, one of which is often ranked at the top of national surveys and all are involved nationally in professional activities. Our librarians, staff and faculty work with a variety of other professionals and with students who identify as LGBTQI. In addition, the state also has top notch libraries, many that have received national recognition, as well as library employees who are recognized as national leaders. These libraries employ individuals who identify as LGBTQI. We are concerned that HB2 may interfere with those students and employees living fully engaged lives and serving local communities. Also, we are troubled that the national reaction to HB2 may interfere with libraries and library schools recruiting and retaining the best and brightest people.

We are also apprehensive about the effect of this bill on our economy. Many of our libraries are dependent on local economies to aid in funding, whether from the State Aid for Public Libraries or local county and city government funding. With the reactions we have seen to this bill from business, industry, and tourism, we are concerned with how this is affecting funding for libraries. In addition, we fear that HB2 will put our federal funding in jeopardy, especially in relation to Title IX but possibly other federally funded initiatives. Libraries are already underfunded in relation to the variety of services that are offered to all residents. Any decrease in funding has the potential of hurting our library users by decreasing our ability to provide services and resources they need for sustainable communities. Such services may include workforce development, information literacy initiatives, job searching, and education at all levels.
We have already seen one of our national associations, the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association, cancel its 2016 Institute which was to be held in Charlotte in September. It saddens us that our colleagues believe they will not be safe in travelling to North Carolina and we are disappointed that ALSC believed cancellation of the Institute was the only option available to them. Our librarians are missing an opportunity to attend a national conference being held locally because of HB2. Also, HB2 compromises our ability to serve as national leaders by not holding this conference here and has librarians cancelling plans to attend local conferences with national reach.

While we appreciate Governor McCrory issuing an executive order, we believe this is not enough. We urge the Governor and the North Carolina Legislature to repeal this law in the upcoming legislative session.

Sincerely,

Rodney Lippard, President
North Carolina Library Association