

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We appreciate your support for providing funding increases for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and urge you to continue this trend in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. With these increases, we are closer to realizing the changes made to the program in the bipartisan reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act, which now requires an infusion of \$9 million to fully implement.

During the ongoing pandemic, libraries continue to serve as a vital source of trusted information, especially regarding COVID-19. Many libraries are helping seniors and other high-risk residents access local, state, and federal public health resources register for vaccines. Libraries serve a vital role in our communities, offering free access to computing services and essential information on a wide range of topics, skills, and career training. The American Library Association (ALA) reports that nearly 100 percent of public libraries offer free internet access, which is critical for families who lack reliable internet at home. Furthermore, in rural areas, more than 83 percent of libraries report 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 filled out online, 90 percent of public libraries offer technology training, and 76 percent help people navigate e-government resources.

Libraries, however, provide more than just internet access. According to the ALA, more than 92 percent of public libraries offer services which help patrons with career and employment services, such as preparing resumes and conducting job searches. Libraries help entrepreneurs innovate with 3-D printers and makerspaces, while librarians help entrepreneurs create business plans and growth strategies through access to specialized collections for small businesses. They also provide tailored assistance, such as services to veterans, which help individuals access earned benefits and acquire the tools to re-integrate back into civilian life.

Moreover, libraries advance education in communities across the country by providing children with homework assistance and exposure to books and information that enhance their literacy skills. Numerous surveys show 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

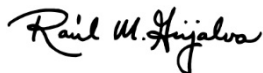
summer reading programs to help them prepare to learn in school and succeed. Furthermore, libraries also prepare today's students for tomorrow's job market by providing coding and STEM activities.

Unfortunately, during this time of increased demand, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19, many libraries continue to face cuts and severe budget pressures, leading to closures, reduced hours, and staff reductions. LSTA is the only annual federal program that helps public libraries meet community needs, provide enhanced services through technology, reach underserved populations, and retain librarians while recruiting new and diverse entrants into this important field. Consisting of a state formula program, which is amplified by a state match and competitive grants, LSTA is more essential now than ever. In the 2018 reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act, Congress strengthened LSTA to support data driven tools to tailor services to address and meet community needs, help libraries prepare for and provide services after a disaster or emergency, enhance services for Native Americans, and recruit and train library and information science professionals from a broad range of backgrounds. The new law also enables increases in the Grants to States program to be shared more broadly across states while ensuring that no state loses funding.

We greatly appreciate the strong support for LSTA provided by this Subcommittee in recent years, including the \$197.4 million appropriated in FY 2021. Increasing funding for LSTA, especially by providing a boost of \$9 million for the Grants to States program, will help ensure that Americans of all ages have access to libraries, internet, and information services; the resources they need to develop literacy skills and achieve academically; and the tools to search for, find, and create jobs. While the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan included much needed boosts for LSTA, increasing the regular annual funding remains a critical priority. Indeed, the current funding level remains below the high-water mark of \$213.5 million in FY 2010.

Thank you for your attention to this request and your continued support in sustaining and strengthening our nation's libraries.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Don Young
Member of Congress

/s/
A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

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Gerald E. Connolly
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Mark Takano
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Abigail Spanberger
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Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
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