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ALA American Library Association

April 19, 2021

J. Scott Cascone, Ed.D., Superintendent
Board of Education Members
West Orange Public Schools
179 Eagle Rock Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052

Dear Superintendent Cascone, President Trigg-Scales, and Board of Education Members:

At a moment when the ability to navigate a vast and constantly shifting world of information is a matter of profound consequence, we are alarmed to hear that West Orange Public Schools proposes to cut the number of certified information professionals—librarians, or school library media specialists—and leave students in the district without appropriately staffed libraries.¹

More than 60 studies from across the country show that student achievement—from reading scores and digital proficiency to graduation rates—is higher in schools with professionally staffed libraries.² Pairing *National School Library Standards*³ and *New Jersey's Learning Standards*, your school librarians impact every learner in West Orange Public Schools, embedding a continuum of literacies across the curriculum and providing access to resources, tools and learning experiences that nurture critical thinking, exploration, and innovation. They support their colleagues with curated resources, collaborative instruction, thoughtful technology integration, and professional development.

West Orange's school librarians have risen to the challenges of this past year with intentionality for the academic and emotional well-being of their learning communities, continuing to build a shared culture of reading and inquiry. Now, as districts address the impacts of COVID-19 on students, school librarians are integral to the community's resilience and to the priorities outlined by Education Secretary Cardona for allocation of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds.

The proposal to cut school librarians contradicts West Orange Public Schools' strategic plan and undermines the district's commitment to equity. Moreover, New Jersey's administrative code requires that students receive library media services and information literacy instruction. Education in this

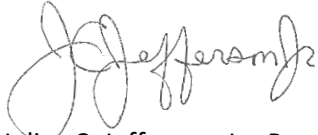
¹ http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/advocacy/statements/docs/AASL_Appropriate_Staffing.pdf

² <https://www.baltimorelibraryproject.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Library-Impact-Studies.pdf>

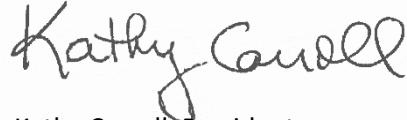
³ <https://standards.aasl.org/>

information age requires full-time certified information specialists, and we urge you to appropriately staff all West Orange schools with full-time school librarians.

Sincerely,



Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., President
American Library Association



Kathy Carroll, President
American Association of School Librarians

cc: Beth Thomas, President, New Jersey Association of School Librarians
Jen Schureman, President, New Jersey Library Association