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# ALA American Library Association

September 13, 2016

Members of the City Council  
City of Killeen, Texas  
101 N. College Street  
Killeen, TX 76541

Dear City Council Members:

Public libraries are cornerstones of vibrant communities, providing access to educational, informational, cultural and recreational resources that strengthen the fabric of our democratic society. The value the community places on the Copper Mountain Branch library is evidenced by its more than 300 visitors per day. As Presidents of the American Library Association and the Public Library Association—representing more than 58,000 members across the country—we are deeply concerned about the devastating impact the proposed closure of Copper Mountain will have on those residents and the city as a whole.

Professionally trained staff at public libraries support children, youth and families through services and resources that advance student learning, school readiness and family literacy. Storytime at Copper Mountain Branch is so popular that it meets three times per week and its leader of nearly 15 years, Miss Amy, is a local celebrity. In addition, library employees assist community users on a daily basis - with a goal of student success - with homework help, research support, reading programs, and educational gaming. Copper Mountain Branch library staff are committed to the vision for today's young readers becoming tomorrow's engaged citizens.

But public library services don't stop with children and families. A recent study by the University of Texas at Austin estimated that public libraries in Texas produce \$1.043 billion in local economic activity, with a return on investment of \$4.42 for every \$1 invested.<sup>1</sup> Public libraries offer job seekers a place to find information, build skills, and use electronic and print resources. They support entrepreneurs and small businesses with information and tools that would otherwise be unaffordable. Moreover, libraries support the larger business community with job training and programming that fosters a stronger workforce.

Often we claim that the value of a library is not in the building itself. Yet the physical location of the Copper Mountain Branch supports community in unique ways because families stationed at the nearby

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ic2.utexas.edu/pubs/texas-public-libraries-economic-benefits-and-creturn-on-investment/>

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military base seek not only programming and resources, but a sense of familiarity and stability that can be so elusive with frequent relocations. It also offers a point of connection between military and civilian residents, who come together for programming, events, or simply to read side-by-side. Finally, it provides a critical, transitional resource for those veterans who choose to stay in Killeen after leaving the service. In fact, an online resource for military families states that the “Killeen community is a model of support for Army families.”<sup>2</sup> The Copper Mountain Library has been this model of support for both military and civilian families and continued funding is an investment in Killeen’s present and future viability as a healthy community. We urge you to reconsider the proposed closure and keep this valuable resource available to all.

Sincerely,



Julie Beth Todaro, Ph.D.  
President  
American Library Association  
Dean of Library Services  
Austin Community College



Felton Thomas, Jr.  
President  
Public Library Association  
Executive Director  
Cleveland Public Library

cc: Ann Farris, City Manager  
Jose Segarra, Mayor

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.military.com/base-guide/fort-hood>