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Statement of Support of Michigan School Libraries

Guided by the belief that free access to information is the cornerstone of a free society, the Michigan Library Association (MLA) has advocated for libraries (public, school, academic and special) on behalf of the state's residents for 128 years. As K-12 school budgets have decreased and technology has taken over our lives, the question of employing certified librarians to serve our schools has risen to the surface. MLA believes that now, more than ever, the need exists to advocate for higher standards and supports the right for every student to have equal access to resources and information by placing a certified, qualified and credentialed librarian within every public school in Michigan.

Libraries and media centers are an essential and critical space within the K-12 public school building. At the same time, and even more important are the people that teach our children. Certified librarians are indispensable and vital in helping build and shape a students' learning process. A person to guide our students to resources and information is not only important to early growth and learning, but also to their future success as adults. It is appalling and sad that only 8 percent of Michigan's K-12 schools have a librarian – having dropped over 73% since 2000.

Research has shown that school librarians have a direct impact on student achievement and as a result can help students achieve literacy skills that are holding Michigan below acceptable standards (35th in the nation in literacy.) Librarians are credentialed educators and are highly qualified to teach 21st Century skills – digital citizenship, communications, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, literacy, and leadership. Our students need these skills in order to be adequately prepared for college, careers, and lifelong learning.

MLA is proud to support the Michigan Department of Education's goal to employ full-time, certified school librarians in every Michigan school. If MLA can provide further testimony, please contact Executive Director, Deborah E. Mikula at dmikula@milibraries.org