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August 18, 2020

Dear [Senator/Representative Name]:

On behalf of the 396 public library systems across Michigan, we write to urge relief for America’s libraries in the next phase of coronavirus legislation. COVID-19 has caused significant revenue losses for libraries, resulting in thousands of furloughs and layoffs to date. Fiscal stabilization is needed to preserve crucial library services for students, job seekers, and small businesses.

If you have not already, we respectfully request that you cosponsor the Library Stabilization Fund Act (S. 4181 / H.R. 7486), which would provide $2 billion for libraries administered by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services. The legislation would keep nearly 370,000 library workers on the job, defray costs related to safe re-opening, and support a range of library services to millions of patrons, including:

* High-speed internet access and digital literacy training
* Resources to facilitate remote learning for educators and students of all ages.
* Employment assistance, from resume writing to job search and career skills training
* Support in applying for government services such as veteran’s benefits, unemployment assistance, and medical coverage
* Programs that foster early literacy, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning

As the immediate impacts of COVID-19 came to light, many of America's 117,000 libraries were on the front lines of serving individuals and communities. Libraries continue to serve at the forefront of digital equity by supporting distance learning through home broadband access, devices, and technical support.

Libraries in Michigan serve over 10 million residents (with more than 50% of Michigan residents who have a library card). Since early March 2020, our library

buildings have been physically closed, but that hasn’t stopped them from continuing to provide virtual and curbside services in their effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus. They pivoted quickly to this new reality and have been innovative in the delivery of their services, especially to children with online story times and grab and go kits. They have boosted their WiFi from their parking lots (now available 24/7), purchased more eBook content, and provided reference services via phone from their remote offices. In all 83 Michigan counties, our libraries continue to work closely and cooperatively with community organizations to address COVID-19 challenges.

Over $900,000 was distributed within Michigan from the Institute for Museum and Library Services funding through the CARES Act and has been awarded to 300 libraries for digital inclusion, PPE funding, and statewide training resources to address ongoing COVID-19 challenges.

However, Americans' access to all these vital community library services is at risk exactly when they are most needed. Significant declines in state and local budgets, likely reductions in charitable contributions, and the need to adapt library services to accommodate remote learning have already put the financial stability of many libraries at risk.

To help meet these needs, we urge you, if you have not already, to cosponsor the Library Stabilization Fund Act and support efforts to provide at least $2 billion in emergency funding for libraries. These funds will provide a minimum of $10 million for Michigan to meet urgent local needs, such as expanding access to computer instruction, business trend databases, homework centers, access to eBooks and adaptive technology, bookmobile service, and development of outreach programs to underserved communities. The bill also will ensure that these funds could be used to absorb the unplanned-for costs of cleaning facilities and redesigning libraries to accommodate new public health requirements.

Michigan residents already know they can depend on their local library for a range of services and information. On behalf of 1700 library members in Michigan, the Michigan Library Association urges you to support the ability of libraries across the country to serve their communities through this national crisis.

Thank you,



Jennifer Dean

MLA President

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Deborah E. Mikula

MLA Executive Director

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Jenny Marr

MLA Chair, Advocacy & Legislative Committee