



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

## Statement from State Senator Jose M. Serrano Re: Funding for Libraries

JOSÉ M. SERRANO March 5, 2012



"Today I had the privilege of joining Senator Hugh Farley, Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Libraries, for a Roundtable on the funding of Public Libraries in New York State. Although the Governor's proposed budget slated a 4 percent increase for education, libraries are not included in that increase, despite being extremely important educational facilities on which the people of New York depend.

"In my district, and across the state, many low and middle income families rely on libraries for reading, research, and computer and internet access. These institutions provide educational programs like ESL workshops and reading series for students, and engage in

cultural activities like art exhibitions. Libraries give New Yorkers scholastic opportunities they may not otherwise have had and continue to pave the road for a more inclusive society-bridging the digital divide in poorer communities where not all families have access to computers or internet and balancing the playing field for people throughout the state.

"During my time in the City Council, I chaired the Committee that oversaw libraries, and witnessed firsthand the services and opportunities they provide to our communities. Today we heard advocates and representatives from libraries across the state, who made it clear that yearly budget cuts have made it extremely difficult for libraries to continue serving a public that, during these tough economic times, needs these institutions more than ever. This is illustrated by the fact that since 2007 library usage has increased by 12 percent, while their state funding has decreased by 23 percent.

"Libraries are an investment in the future of New York, and ensure that knowledge and culture is available to everyone- despite their income or social status. As such, we must ensure that they are adequately funded in the FY 2013 budget. I commend Senator Farley for convening today's roundtable, and for bringing much-needed attention to these struggling pillars of our society."