



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daphne Jordan

Senator Jordan and Her Senate Colleagues send a Letter to the Governor to Support Library Funding in this year's 2022-23 Enacted Budget

DAPHNE JORDAN March 15, 2022

| ISSUE: **LIBRARIES. LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION, 2022-2023 BUDGET, LIBRARY COMMITTEE, ACCESS TO EDUCATION, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Dear Governor, Leaders, and Chairperson:

We write in support of New York State's libraries and library systems requesting additional funding in our 2022- 23 Enacted Budget. Specifically, we respectfully request the inclusion of at least an additional \$27 million in library operating aid for a total of \$123.1 million, a figure which represents the full statutory and formulaic obligation of our State to libraries established under the Education Law as well as an adjustment for inflation. Additionally, we respectfully ask for an additional \$31 million for library construction funds, bringing the total library construction fund allocation to \$45 million.

Libraries have historically provided an innumerable amount of services to our communities. They are not just facilities to access books, but also serve as locations of life-long learning, access points of information and programming, and as community gathering places. During the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries continued to serve in several different roles, reopening in mid-2020 and offering a vital outlet to communities with their many programs, including

high-speed broadband internet for many areas of the State including areas of my district without broadband access. Section 273 of the Education Law establishes the formula under which libraries are supposed to be funded, and for more than a decade New York State has failed to meet this statutory obligation, leaving our libraries to fall behind in terms of funding and State investment. With the favorable revenue climate in which this budget is being negotiated, we have an opportunity to finally adhere to the formula established under the Education Law while also working towards making our libraries whole. Accordingly, we ask that the final Enacted Budget include \$123.1 million in total library aid funds, an increase of \$27 million over the Executive Budget proposal. This figure includes what New York State is obligated to pay as well as adjustments for inflation and underfunding from previous years.

In addition to operational aid for libraries, there is a significant lack of capital funding across New York State for our libraries. According to statistics gathered by the New York Library Association, more than half of New York State's libraries are more than sixty years old. Accordingly, many need major infrastructure improvements, not only including Americans with Disabilities Act compliance updates but also basic structural work and improved heating and plumbing, as well as general accessibility issues. Without funding from the State, infrastructure upgrades and improvements in these areas are not possible. The 2022-23 Executive Budget included \$14 million for the library construction fund, a cut of \$20 million from last year's budget. We ask that we address the many needs of our libraries and include an additional \$31 million in the Enacted Budget for a total of \$45 million for library construction.

Libraries are our communities' basic point of contact with lifelong learning. As a former library official and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Libraries, I often say "If

you can read, you can do anything,” and as such, investments in our State’s libraries are essential. Historic investments in our libraries are especially timely in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the reduced educational outcomes that it caused. We once again ask for an increase of \$27 million in library aid compared to the Executive Budget for \$123.1 million total as well as for the addition of \$31 million in library construction funds for a total of \$45 million.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Daphne Jordan
Senator, 43rd District

George Borrello
Senator, 57th District

Anthony Palumbo
Senator, 1st District

Mario Mattera
Senator, 2nd District

Peter Oberacker
Senator, 51st District

Dan Stec

Senator, 45th District

Pamela Helming

Senator, 54th District

Alexis Weik

Senator, 3rd District

Fred Akshar

Senator, 52nd District

Joseph Griffo

Senator, 47th District

Jim Tedisco Senator,
49th District

Jessica Ramos

Senator, 13th District

Michael Martucci

Senator, 42nd District

Sue Serino

Senator, 41st District