April 27, 2015

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Chairman, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2 on Education Finance
State Capitol, Room 2160
Sacramento, CA. 95814

The Honorable Marty Block
Chairman, Senate Budget Subcommittee #1 on Education Finance
State Capitol, Room 4072
Sacramento, CA. 95814

RE: Support of Public Library Funding in the 2015-16 Budget

Dear Assemblyman McCarty and Senator Block,

Last year, a bi-partisan group of legislators supported an effort to begin the restoration of major statewide budget cuts, which have impacted public libraries throughout the state. We, the undersigned members of the Legislature are requesting your consideration in providing additional funding to public libraries again in the 2015-16 State Budget, particularly in light of the fact that the Governor’s January Budget eliminated last year’s additional funding, assuming it as “one time” in nature.

Specifically, we urge you to support an augmentation of funding for public libraries, totaling $11.5 million, which will be spread among several major program areas and, additionally would provide some staffing for the State Library which has been decimated by cuts as well:

1) $4 million for the California Library Services Act - the loaning and lending system that exists between cooperative library jurisdictions,
2) $2 million for the California Library Literacy Services program – 1) to address the 4,000 adult learners who are currently on waiting lists in need of literacy services and 2) to offset some of the pressures that will be associated with assuming a larger service group due to the AB 86/adult education consortia modifications,
3) $4 million in broadband connectivity grants - to continue connecting public libraries to a major broadband Internet “backbone” operated by the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California (CENIC) that was launched last year as the Governor’s initiative,
4) $1 million for the Career Online High School library literacy program – to continue to fund and/or expand grants for libraries in order to provide literacy coaches and resources to adults looking to earn an accredited high school diploma and prepare for workforce entry,
5) $500,000 for the CENIC Administration fee and modest staffing increase for the State Library
During the months of February and March, many of us were visited by library directors and library supporters in our district offices. We heard from these grass roots advocates how libraries were receiving little to no reimbursement for books and materials shared between jurisdictions, despite the fact that statute requires adequate reimbursement for libraries for providing this service. We heard how thousands of unserved adults were on waiting lists for literacy services and we learned that the libraries are overwhelmed with patrons of all ages who are seeking to use the Internet or the library Wifi to be able to search for jobs, download Homework Help tutorial programs, and apply for the Affordable Care Act or file for veterans benefits.

Additionally, some legislators have expressed an interest in continuing, and possibly expanding, two successful pilot programs in Los Angeles and Sacramento, which partner adult literacy learners with an academic coach in preparation for securing a high school diploma. These learners are adults who not only wish to learn how to read, but who want to take their education to the “next level,” by obtaining their diploma, with the goal of entering the workforce or obtaining a better job.

Unfortunately, since 2000, state support for these valuable programs has shrunk from $85 million to $6.85 million, only minimally maintaining the integrity of the state’s loaning and lending and adult literacy programs. And it is very important to note that any additional state dollars for the loaning and lending, adult literacy programs, and the broadband connectivity significantly enhance California’s ability to meet approximately $15 million in match requirements for federal funding. (Of this federal funding, money also goes to support the two Braille and Talking Books libraries in the state.)

Last year, an effort was launched in the Assembly by Assemblyman Mike Gatto to request the Budget Subcommittee Number 2 on Education Finance approve a $10 million augmentation for public library programs. When the approved Assembly amount went to the Budget Conference Committee, it was reduced by $5 million. In final Budget negotiations with the Governor’s office, it was further reduced to $3 million. In the 2015-16 Budget, the Governor did not continue the $3 million in funding.

This year, as Budget discussions continue, we the undersigned, would like to encourage a joint-house effort in support of an $11.5 million library funding augmentation. Our request represents only a small percentage of what the libraries have lost in terms of state funding over the last decade. We hope that you, as the two leaders of your respective subcommittees, will give consideration to this important funding request.

Very Truly Yours,

Mike Gatto
The Honorable Mike Gatto
Assemblyman, Forty-Third District

Terry Hill
The Honorable Terry Hill
Senator, Thirteenth District

Ted Gaines
The Honorable Ted Gaines
Senator, First District

Mark Stone
The Honorable Mark Stone
Senator, Twenty-Ninth District
The Honorable Jim Nielsen  
Senator, Fourth District

The Honorable Rich Gordon  
Assemblyman, Twenty-Fourth District

The Honorable Brian Maienschein  
Assemblyman, Seventy-Seventh District

The Honorable Jim Cooper  
Assemblyman, Ninth District

The Honorable Brian Jones  
Assemblyman, Seventy-First District

The Honorable Susan Bonilla  
Assemblywoman, Fourteenth District

The Honorable Lois Wolk  
Senator, Third District

The Honorable Kevin Mullin  
Assemblyman, Twenty-Second District

The Honorable Jacqui Irwin  
Assemblywoman, Forty-Fourth District

The Honorable Bill Dodd  
Assemblyman, Fourth District

The Honorable David Hadley  
Assemblyman, Sixty-Sixth District

The Honorable Frank Bigelow  
Assemblyman, Fifth District

The Honorable Marie Waldron  
Assemblywoman, Seventy-Fifth District

The Honorable Das Williams  
Assemblyman, Thirty-Seven District

The Honorable Tom Lackey  
Assemblyman, Thirty-Sixth District

The Honorable Jim Wood  
Assemblyman, Second District

The Honorable Katcho Achadjian  
Assemblyman, Thirty-Fifth District

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman  
Assemblywoman, Thirteenth District
cc: Members of the Assembly and Senate Budget Subcommittees on Education Finance
Mark Martin, Consultant, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No 2
Amy Rutschow, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus
Anita Lee, Consultant, Senate Budget Subcommittee No 1
Cheryl Black, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Assemblywoman Toni Atkins, Speaker, California State Assembly
Assemblywoman Shirley Weber, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez, Vice Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
Senator Kevin De Leon, Senate President pro Tempore
Senator Mark Leno, Chair, Senate Budget Committee
Senator Jim Nielsen, Vice Chair, Senate Budget Committee
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