



October 27, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: 2021-22 State Budget: Funding Request – Public Library Programs

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the California Library Association (CLA), the statewide association representing city, county and special district libraries, I would like to thank you for your past support of public library programs in the State Budget, and for your talented leadership as the State navigates the challenges brought about by the coronavirus. As you are well aware, the 2020 pandemic has exposed tremendous areas of community needs for students, homebound seniors, and our library patrons who now find themselves out of work. One of the true bright spots of the crippling pandemic has been the work of California's public libraries in providing critical community services. However, California's public libraries are offering these programs on a razor thin margin, which is simply not sustainable. To that end, CLA respectfully requests your consideration of budget relief funding for the following programs under Section 6120 of the California State Library, as you craft your 2021-22 State Budget. (These requests are listed in priority order.)

1. Restoration of the cut to the California Library Services Act - \$1.75 million
"ongoing"

The California Library Services Act has been in existence since the early 1970's, with the sole purpose of requiring that libraries participate in a cooperative and collaborative manner of sharing resources among the nine geographic regions of the state. The CLSA funding is truly the glue that holds the cooperative loaning and lending structure in place for these libraries. At its origination, this program was intended to provide reimbursement for books and materials traveling by van in between libraries, for patrons requesting specific items that their own neighborhood library may not possess. While

libraries still continue to move physical items between jurisdictions and branches, now CLSA dollars are often used for large digital subscription services, such as eBooks and eMagazines to promote a broader collection of digital resources for libraries which aids students with homework, vulnerable populations who can't get to the library, and people learning new skills for workforce development. Since March, libraries have seen their eBook use nearly double. Libraries are partnering with schools to provide age-appropriate eBooks for homework help in the absence of school library electronic collections. Within San Mateo County, 14 school districts have partnered with the public libraries for eCollections for their students, and public libraries are issuing thousands of library cards to students through these partnerships.

Due to the state's fiscal crisis brought on by the pandemic, your May Revision proposed cutting the CLSA by \$1.75 million, but it did not tie restoration of these funds to the so-called federal government "trigger" package, should one ultimately materialize. The Legislature subsequently approved the cut, despite our best efforts to protect the funding. This cut leaves the CLSA at only \$1.8 million in the baseline, which is one of its lowest points since Governor Brown zeroed out all \$12 million that was previously in the program. As you can imagine, these cuts have been devastating to the CLSA. The impact of such cuts is the erosion the collaborative sharing principle of the CLSA. In past years when funding was zeroed out, CLA found that large libraries pulled out of the regional system only to tell "non-residents" that the privilege of borrowing books at their library will require them to pay \$80 per person for a non-resident library card. For those on a limited income, who may want to borrow books where they work versus where they live, these fees are a deterrent for most patrons. Ultimately, high fees create a system of "haves and have nots" for library patrons, which is unacceptable when the public library has historically been thought of as "the great equalizer."

CLA would respectfully request the inclusion of an augmentation of \$1.75 million (ongoing) in the California Library Services Act in the 2021-22 Budget to restore the program's baseline to \$3.6 million.

2. Lunch at the Library – Ongoing or one-time funding - \$1.25 million

For many years, CLA has worked with the State Library on the successful "Lunch at the Library" program where children who are in need of a meal during the summer months, can receive their lunch at the library. Almost 220 public libraries provided nearly 300,000 meals to more than 32,000 children in 2019. Lunch at the Library has a dual purpose of promoting literacy and addressing the "summer slide," where library staff offer programs and books to children while food is served in a non-judgmental setting for children and, in some cases, their parents. However, the impact of COVID-19 and the need for quality meals for the student population this year was staggering. In Monterey County alone, for example, the libraries served over 12,000 meals over the summer, with service ongoing at seven branches through the fall, with schools still closed. In Alameda, use increased 300% and a father shared that without this program, his children would have gone without. In Nevada County, a child reported that she and her three siblings would

not have these meals without the library bringing this program to them. These are unanticipated expansions of the program that no one could have forecast a few years ago, and this is happening across California.

Lunch at the Library is a program that Senator Holly Mitchell has championed in recent years, and CLA was pleased to see that you included \$1 million in "one-time" funding in your January 2020-21 Budget for this purpose. Unfortunately, when the pandemic hit, and the May Revise was released, that funding was removed. CLA understands that the Budget is going to remain tight as the economy slowly recovers, but there is something so fundamental about the issue of making sure that children have at least one quality meal per day that is so urgent right now. Additionally, while some libraries are still closed or are operating by limiting attendance, many libraries are offering Wifi in the parking lot, or essential wrap-around services for parents when they and their children come by the library to obtain their free meal.

Due to the increase in the services requested of the library community relative to Lunch at the Library (which received no funding in 2020-21) CLA respectfully requests an appropriation of \$1.25 million. While we are requesting one-time funds, making these funds ongoing would be a game-changer for the program.

3. Zip Books – One-time funding: \$750,000

CLA was grateful to you for including \$1 million in your January 2020-21 State Budget for "Zip Books," a program which features an innovative way of providing books and materials to patrons who, for various reasons, are unable to physically get to a local library to obtain their desired item. The program is based in 327 public libraries and was able to serve 45,000 people, focusing on those who are in rural communities and underserved residents. Through their participating public library, a patron orders a book that is not currently part of the existing collection and has the book delivered to his or her residence through a partnership with Amazon. When the patron is finished with the material, the book is returned to the local library where it becomes part of the collection or a neighboring library's collection.

One library reports, "One year ago, a patron came in with a grave prognosis, stage 4 lung cancer. He is an active library user and is extremely fit in a tri-athletic way, and a former university professor. So naturally he delved into researching everything he could about this disease. Fortunately, there is a lot written about cancer. Unfortunately, much of what is written is anecdotal. He needed facts. So, he asked the library to Zip a book, a textbook. On January 9th he came in with some great news, his PET scan was clear. He told me he read every word in that Zip Book and devised an 87-point plan to augment his fight. He had reduced chemo treatments to 1 every 3 weeks instead of weekly over the course of the year. He just came to conclusion a week before the scan that he was quitting the chemo altogether. Then he received the good news. He credits

the Zip Book to saving his life. So, I must credit everyone involved with the Zip program, the making the exception, the allocation of funds, everyone. Thank you!"

A grandmother asked the library for help with her granddaughter, who was struggling with her dad being deployed overseas. She asked the library to order some Zip Books that help her understand why their parent is deployed, and to offer comfort. The grandmother reported that Barnes & Noble had nothing, and the library's collection was limited. The library ordered 5 Zip Books and mailed them to their house. The grandmother reported that her granddaughter couldn't be happier with the books and they even ordered two of them to keep at home. She said the books have really helped at home with talking to her about her dad being overseas when she becomes upset.

Unfortunately, due to the declining state revenues, your May Revision eliminated the \$1 million in one-time funding that you had provided for Zip Books, and the program remains without funding for 2020-21. At a time when few libraries are open at full capacity for patrons, and during a period when California is encouraging that people not coalesce indoors, the Zip Book program has become even more important for homebound seniors, the disabled community and mothers with small children. The usage since the pandemic has doubled. CLA respectfully requests your consideration of \$750,000 in one-time funding for Zip Books in your 2021-22 Budget.

4. Career Online High School – One-time funding - \$750,000

Over the course of the last few years, public libraries and the State Library have assisted 793 adults in their efforts to complete a high school diploma using an online program called, "Career Online High School." Twenty-eight counties in the state currently utilize this life-changing program, which enables adults to obtain their diploma and move on to post-secondary degrees (which cannot be done with a GED) or various career paths. A high school diploma has significantly better outcomes than a GED, and with this online program students who may not be able to get to a regular classroom, or who work irregular schedules, can benefit. Similar to the Lunch at the Library program, the Career Online High School program is quite successful because it originates from the library, which is a non-judgmental space for learning, growth and development, and is already embedded in communities large and small throughout the state. In addition, libraries find matching funds for this program, enabling small businesses to sponsor students to this significant educational goal. Career Online High School received \$3 million several years ago in the State Budget, but the program has not received funding recently. \$750,000 in one-time funds would help to advance the education goals of many adults in the state, for whom a high school diploma is a step to a career, a promotion, or college.

Governor Newsom, CLA understands that finances continue to remain tight as we navigate the "new normal" under the COVID-19 recovery, but it appears there are some signs of hope regarding the state's fiscal picture, as per the recent Legislative

Analyst's October report. CLA respectfully requests your inclusion of funding for these important library programs in your upcoming January 2021-22 State Budget and we look forward to continuing to work with you, your Administration, the First Partner, and your Department of Finance to elevate the role of public libraries as a critical partner during the pandemic and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. Should you have any questions or desire additional information, please feel free to reach out to me directly or to our CLA lobbyists, Mike Dillon (mdillon@ka-pow.com) and Christina DiCaro (cdicaro@ka-pow.com) of KP Public Affairs.

Sincerely,



Hillary Theyer, CLA President
Library Director, County of Monterey

cc: Keely Bosler, Director, Department of Finance
Chris Ferguson, Department of Finance
Greg Lucas, California State Librarian
Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget Committee
Assemblyman Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
Joe Stephenshaw, Staff Director, Senate Budget Committee
Anita Lee, Consultant, Senate Budget Committee
Mark Martin, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee