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CONTACT: Christi Buker, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Library Association
717-766-7663 or christi@palibraries.org

Pennsylvania Public Library Supporters to Meet with State Legislators at a 2020 Virtual Legislative Day Focus on Library Funding.

(Harrisburg – September 21, 2020) – Librarians, staff, volunteers, trustees, patrons and supporters will be reaching out on Monday, September 21, 2020 for PA Library Legislative Day. The purpose is to highlight how public libraries serve Pennsylvania and ask that library funding be maintained as essential support especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

In March, public libraries in the commonwealth were ordered closed to the public and then a few days later to be closed even to staff. Despite buildings being closed, public libraries continued to serve with their existing electronic resources such as audiobooks, e-books, databases, learning resources, and reference service through Chat with a Librarian. With a strong desire to help their communities, creative librarians and staff went beyond existing services and found new ways to serve with online story times, author programs, escape rooms, trivia, DIY programs, and sharing of validated information about COVID-19, food safety resources, and unemployment benefits.

Libraries soon felt the impact of COVID-19 as critical fundraisers to provide operating revenues were cancelled and service fees ranging from faxing, printing, to passport services were lost. Then, when the state budget provided only 5 out of 12 months of funding, public libraries recognized the all too familiar struggle for stable and adequate funding.

“Last year the public library subsidy was increased by $5 million dollars thanks in part to legislative leaders like House Appropriations Chairman Stan Saylor. We were very grateful that many legislators saw the value of library services for all ages and took a significant step in finally restoring funding after the painful 30% cuts more than a decade ago.” said Christi Buker, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Library Association. “As public libraries will be essential for struggling communities to recover, we need to make sure that libraries receive full funding in order to continue operations.”

Today, as library supporters reach out to their state legislators, we know that great examples of what libraries are doing will be shared. Positive impacts range from the grateful, and sometimes lonely seniors who received phone calls from library staff, to the appreciative families who found family-friendly activities and stories online, and to unemployed workers who receive support in creating resumes and applying for work. These library advocates will be asking that the state legislature maintain the public library subsidy at the same level as last year’s budget.

About the Pennsylvania Library Association
Founded in 1901, the Pennsylvania Library Association is the state’s oldest professional library organization serving libraries, library employees, library trustees, and Friends of the Library groups. PaLA represents more than 1,200 personal, institutional, and commercial members affiliated with public, academic, special and school libraries. The association represents the profession in Harrisburg with the state legislature and provides opportunities for professional growth, leadership development and continuing education for librarians. For more information, visit www.palibraries.org, facebook.com/PALibraries or @PALibraryAssoc on Twitter. ###