



November 5, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
S-146A, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Vice Chairwoman Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA) and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) representing public, school, and academic libraries across the country, we urge the Committee to make a substantial investment in our nation's future by dedicating a fair share of the sequestration relief included in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (BBA) towards libraries, literacy, and education.

The BBA eliminates most of the harmful sequester spending caps for nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs for Fiscal Year 2016 and Fiscal Year 2017, providing room for critically important investments in libraries and education programs through appropriations. ALA urges Congress to restore the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) to the pre-sequester level of \$213.5 million which had been cut to \$180.9 million in FY15.

The programs and services supported by Labor-HHS-Education appropriations legislation serve a broad range of constituents and needs—starting in infancy—and improve Americans' lives. Libraries provide literacy development skills for our youngest children; on-line homework assistance in and after school for students; access to job skills development, GED attainment, and application tools for adults; access to government documents and services; research resources for small businesses; community gathering places for all, among other services.

Every day, libraries across the country provide no-fee public access to computers and the internet in some of the most distressed communities and schools, both rural and urban. According to a recent ALA report, 65 percent of all libraries nationwide are the only provider of free internet access in their communities. In rural areas, public libraries are even more critical, with 73

percent serving as their community's only free internet provider. Libraries are integral to closing the digital divide for students and adults striving to become an effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce.

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) is the only federal program that helps school and public libraries meet community needs, provide enhanced services through technology, reach underserved populations, and retain librarians while recruiting new entrants to this important field. Robust federal support for the state formula program and competitive grants provided by LSTA is more essential now than ever. The bulk of this program is a population-based grant funded to each state through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Each state must match the federal funds and they then determine how they will allocate their LSTA funds, often relying upon this money to provide job searching databases, resume workshops, summer reading projects, and so much more.

Now that Congress has reached an historic agreement to replace sequestration cuts for two years, it is crucial that you reinvest in the literacy needs and lifelong educational well-being of Americans. An adequately funded Labor-HHS-Education bill will help to improve the lives of children and adults and we strongly believe that it deserves the moral and financial support of Congress. We urge you to use the relief provided in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 to raise the allocation for LSTA.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Members, Senate and House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee