

ALA American Library Association

February 1, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

On behalf of the 57,000 members of the American Library Association (ALA), I urge Congress to quickly enact Fiscal Year 2022 funding with increases for vital library programs. Congress must make this a top priority.

In recognizing the important role of libraries in communities and schools, the House last year passed the LHHS spending bill which included a \$9 million increase for the Library Services and Technology Act (for a total of \$206 million), while the Senate draft included a \$6 million increase for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program (\$34 million). ALA supports these levels; however, these increases are not yet realized—their budgets effectively frozen through the duration of the CR at last year's fiscal levels. Every day of uncertainty in the final spending bills adds further uncertainty to public and school libraries working to meet the growing demand for services they provide to communities.

A recent editorial in the Washington Post noted that “Libraries are at the heart of communities. Even at times in the pandemic when physical libraries were closed, libraries loaned e-books and digital movies. More recently, computer labs at public libraries have become a lifeline for people applying for jobs and doing their first Zoom interviews... lending out laptops and Wi-Fi devices... Buildings may not have been open, but libraries were never closed... Communities that invest in libraries are well prepared for whatever the next chapter brings.”

The ongoing pandemic strains the available resources of library services which is facing unprecedented demand for broadband and other library services. As many schools and workplaces operate in a limited or even closed, capacity, reliance on 24-hour broadband and connective devices has grown. For many, the library is the only resource available for connectivity.

We urge Congress to quickly finalize its FY 2022 spending bills and its vital investments for libraries and education which will have a profound impact on services to students, families, adults, veterans, rural communities, and many others.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kathi Kromer



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