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ALA American Library Association

April 23, 2021

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Members of the City Council
District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser, Chair Mendelson, and Council Members:

With its campaign to *Recover Strong*, District of Columbia Public Schools recently announced that school buildings will fully reopen in fall 2021. Yet some of those buildings will reopen without school librarians, if proposed cuts are enacted, diminishing the district's promise to maximize learning and promote equity. As presidents of the American Library Association and American Association for School Librarians, we urge the DC City Council to appropriately staff DC Public Schools¹ and ensure that every student has a certified school librarian.

In a letter to this body last year, we cited research that shows student achievement is higher in schools with professionally staffed libraries.² As you implement evidence-based strategies for re-engaging students in learning and restitching the fabric of school culture, it is critical to recognize that a student who is information literate is healthier and better prepared for the future; a student with access to literature of their own choosing is more likely to engage in lifelong learning and inquiry; and that a student who can rely on the library as a safe space to explore ideas and learn about themselves and others is a more confident and empathetic learner, co-worker, and community member.

Your school librarians impact every learner in their schools, embedding a continuum of literacies across the curriculum and providing access to resources, tools and learning experiences that nurture critical thinking, exploration, and innovation. They help today's learners discover their voices and preserve the stories of the past. They support their colleagues with curated resources, collaborative instruction, thoughtful technology integration, and professional development.

April is National School Library Month, a time to celebrate the impact of school libraries and librarians on their learning communities. DCPS librarians have risen to the challenges of this past year with intentionality for the academic and emotional well-being of their learning communities, continuing to empower students and nurture culture of reading, inquiry, and agency. As districts moves to mitigate

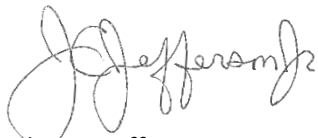
¹ http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/advocacy/statements/docs/AASL_Appropriate_Staffing.pdf

² <https://www.baltimorelibraryproject.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Library-Impact-Studies.pdf>

the impacts of COVID-19 on students and schools plan to move their learning communities forward, school librarians are integral to the community's resilience and to the priorities outlined by Education Secretary Cardona for allocation of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds.

Proposed cuts to school librarians contradict DCPS's strategic priorities and undermine the district's commitment to equity. We echo the call by the DC Board of Education for every DCPS student to have a professionally staffed and adequately resourced library. Education in this information age requires full-time certified information specialists, and we urge you to appropriately staff all DC Public Schools with full-time school librarians.

Sincerely,



Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., President
American Library Association
4th Generation Washingtonian



Kathy Carroll, President
American Association of School Librarians

cc: Lewis Ferebee, Ed.D., Chancellor, DC Public Schools
Tracy Sumler, President, DC Library Association
District of Columbia Board of Education