



March 16, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Building Effective School Libraries into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned companies and organizations are united in our dedication to giving all American school children every possible advantage to compete successfully in our global economy. We also believe strongly that that goal cannot be met without providing our children access to effective school library programs. Accordingly, we are writing to respectfully request that you incorporate the **Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries** (or "**SKILLS**") **Act**, currently Section 1251 of S. 312, into legislation before your Committee to reauthorize the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**.

For our society and our economy to succeed, schools must serve as equalizers that provide all students with access to the resources and instruction they need to thrive academically and to become productive and engaged citizens. That goal cannot be met without strong, professionally staffed school libraries. In too many schools across the nation, however, school library budgets and school librarian positions are being cut. Including **SKILLS** in **ESEA** will meaningfully contribute to reversing that crippling counterproductive trend.

Recent data available from the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)¹ highlights the breadth and depth of the problem, and by extension how many millions of students are being disadvantaged. Specifically, NCES data reveals that approximately 8,830 public schools across the nation do not have a school library and, among those that do, nearly 17,000 additional schools do not have a full or part-time state-certified school librarian on staff.

Accordingly, we strongly support the bipartisan **SKILLS Act** – which was introduced by Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Jack Reed (D-RI) on January 29, 2015 – to help ensure that all students graduating from America's schools will be adequately prepared for success in the workplace. Specifically, we ask that you include Section 1251 (Improving Literacy and College and Career Readiness through Effective School Library Programs) of the **SKILLS Act** in your **ESEA** reauthorization bill to provide dedicated funding for:

- Staffing of all school libraries with state-certified or licensed school librarians;

¹ See http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables_list.asp#2012

- Up-to-date books, materials, equipment and technology (including broadband);
- The development of information, digital and research literacy;
- Professional development in the acquisition of digital literacy skills and literacy instruction that is appropriate for all grades;
- Activities that foster increased collaboration among school librarians, teachers and administrators; and
- Providing students access to school libraries during non-school hours, including the hours before and after school, on weekends and during vacation periods.

We stand ready to assist you and your staffs, and the Committee, to achieve these critical objectives. Please do not hesitate to contact Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director of the American Library Association's Washington Office (esheketoff@alawash.org or 202-628-8410), if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Association of American Publishers	Marion (Michigan Public Library Board)
Auto-Graphics, Inc.	Mason Crest
Baker & Taylor	OverDrive
Big Cozy Books, Inc.	Perma-Bound
Booklist Publications	RELX Group (formerly Reed Elsevier)
Bound to Stay Bound Books	Scholastic Inc.
DEMCO, Inc.	School Library Journal
ESCO Information Services	Stack Map LLC
Harry Potter Alliance	The Child's World, Inc.
Junior Library Guild	Total Boox
Mackin Educational Resources	