

# ALA American Library Association

September 3, 2015

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
2101 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA), I am writing to ask that you maintain support for effective school library programs under any conference agreement to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We are pleased that Congress is making steady progress in updating this critical legislation and are optimistic that improvements to ESEA that include effective school library programs will help ensure that all students graduating from America's schools will be adequately prepared for college and success in the workforce.

As poverty rates across America remain high, our schools must serve as an "equalizer" that provides all students with access to the resources and instruction they need to succeed academically and become productive and engaged citizens. Effective school library programs are a wise investment, but in too many schools across the nation, school library budgets and school librarian positions are being cut. This puts our children's education and workforce readiness at peril.

P.L. 89-10, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (original legislation) recognized the correlation between effective school library programs and student success by authorizing \$100 million for the "School Library Resources, Textbooks, and Other Instructional Materials" program under Title II, but as time passed, federal funding was eliminated, state and local support has diminished, and too many students across the nation are finding themselves in schools without the books, technology, and instruction that can only be obtained through effective school library programs.

Recent data<sup>1</sup> available from the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) highlights the lack of support for too many of our students in thousands of schools across the country. NCES data reveals that approximately 8,830 public schools across the nation do not have a school library and for those schools that do have a library, nearly 17,000 schools do not have a full or part-time state-certified school librarian on staff.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information on NCES 2011-2012 data, see [http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables\\_list.asp#2012](http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables_list.asp#2012).

ALA is disheartened by this lack of support for effective school library programs and comprehensive literacy instruction at the federal, state, and local levels because schools with an effective school library program – which includes a state certified school librarian – ensure their students have the best chance to succeed.

State-certified school librarians make the whole school more effective. They work with every student in the school, teaching them to think critically, providing the resources and support they need in school and beyond, and nurturing their creativity. They are an essential partner for all classroom teachers, providing print and digital materials that meet diverse needs and collaborating to deepen student learning and drive success. State-certified librarians are leaders in the school, helping to develop curriculum and connecting other educators to current trends and resources for teaching and learning.

Multiple studies<sup>2</sup> over the years clearly demonstrate that effective school library programs help all students do better academically, even when other school variables are considered. Effective school library programs also foster critical thinking, providing students with the skills they need to analyze and create new ideas in compelling ways.

School libraries are places of opportunity. They foster a safe and nurturing climate during the day and before and after school and serve as critical learning hubs where students use technology and the latest information resources, preparing them to succeed in school and our ever-evolving workforce.

Therefore, ALA is encouraged that provisions included under S. 1177, the Every Child Achieves Act, would support effective school library programs. In particular, ALA is pleased that effective school library program provisions were adopted unanimously during HELP Committee consideration of S. 1177 (amendment offered by Senator Whitehouse was adopted by voice vote) and on the Senate floor (amendment offered by Senators Reed and Cochran was adopted by a vote of 98-0). Accordingly, ALA respectfully asks that you maintain the following provisions that were overwhelmingly adopted by the HELP Committee and the full Senate as part of any conference agreement on reauthorization of ESEA:

#### **Title V, Part H – Literacy and Arts Education**

- Authorize eligible entities to use funds to promote literacy programs that support the development of literacy skills in low-income communities, including developing and enhancing effective school library programs, which may include providing professional development for school librarians, books, and up-to-date materials to low-income schools. [Page 677, line 7 of ECAA]

#### **Title I – Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies**

- Authorize state plans to include a description of how the SEA will assist LEAs in developing effective school library programs to provide students an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills and to help ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education or the workforce without the need for remediation. [Page 78, line 10 of ECAA]

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<sup>2</sup> For additional information on school library impact studies see: <http://keithcurrylance.com/school-library-impact-studies>.

- Authorize local plans to include a description of how the LEA will assist schools in developing effective school library programs to provide students an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills and to help ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education or the workforce without the need for remediation. [Page 121, line 20 of ECAA]

**Title V, Part G – Innovative Technology Expands Children’s Horizons (I-TECH)**

- Requires that the “technology readiness survey” conducted by grantees under the program provide standardized information on the quantity and types of technology infrastructure and access available to the students and in the community served by the school district, including computer devices, access to school libraries, Internet connectivity, operating systems, related network infrastructure, data systems, educator professional learning needs and priorities, and data security. [Page 655, line 1 of ECAA]
- Require that state applications describe how they will take steps to address issues identified as part of the technology readiness survey (which includes access to school libraries as noted above). [Page 659, line 11 of ECAA]
- Authorize states to use funds to ensure that teachers, paraprofessionals, school librarians and media personnel, specialized instructional support personnel, and administrators possess the knowledge and skills to use technology to ensure that all students achieve college and career readiness and digital literacy. [Page 664, line 20 of ECAA]
- Authorize local applications to include a description of the team of educators who will coordinate and carry out the activities under the program, including individuals with responsibility and expertise in instructional technology, teachers who specialize in supporting students who are children with disabilities and English learners, other school leaders, school librarians and media personnel, technology officers, and staff responsible for assessments and data. [Page 670, line 15 of ECAA]
- Require that at least 50 percent of local grant funds be used to carryout professional development in digital learning for teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, school librarians and media personnel, specialized instructional support personnel, technology coordinators, and administrators in the use of technology to support student learning. [Page 671, line 15 of ECAA]
- Require grantees to report on the professional learning activities funded under the grant, including types of activities and entities involved in providing such professional learning to classroom teachers and other staff, such as school librarians. [Page 675, line 23 of ECAA]

**Title II, Part A – Fund for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning**

- Authorize states to use funds for supporting the instructional services provided by effective school library programs. [Page 329, line 18 of ECAA]
- Authorize LEAs to use funds for supporting the instructional services provided by effective school library programs. [Page 353, line 16 of ECAA]

**Title II, Part D – Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN)**

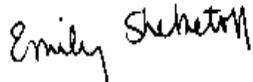
- Require local grants that focus on children in kindergarten through grade 5 to provide high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers, literacy coaches, literacy specialists, English as a second language specialists (as appropriate), principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, school librarians, paraprofessionals, and other program staff. [Page 413, line 23 of ECAA]
- Require local grants that focus on children in grades 6 through 12 to provide training for principals, specialized instruction support personnel, school librarians, and other school district personnel to support, develop, administer, and evaluate high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction initiatives. [Page 415, line 4 of ECAA]
- Authorize all local grants (that serve children in kindergarten through grade 5 or children in grades 6 through 12) to provide time for teachers (and other literacy staff, as appropriate, such as school librarians or specialized instructional support personnel) to meet to plan comprehensive literacy instruction. [Page 416, line 21 of ECAA]

### **Title IX – General Provisions**

- Update definition of “specialized instructional support personnel” to include “school librarians.” [Page 895, line 13 of ECAA]

We appreciate your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress as you continue efforts to reauthorize ESEA.

Sincerely,



Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director  
Washington Office, American Library Association