



CHIEF OFFICERS OF STATE LIBRARY AGENCIES

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President
Jennie Stapp
State Librarian
Montana State Library

7/20/2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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

Vice President/President-Elect
Julie Walker
State Librarian
Georgia Public Library Service

Immediate Past President
Stacey Aldrich
State Librarian
Hawaii State Public Library System

Re: Build America's Libraries Act Within Infrastructure Package

Dear Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi,

Secretary
Jennifer Nelson
State Librarian
New Jersey State Library

The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), an independent organization of the chief officers of state library agencies representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories, respectfully requests your support in including investment in libraries as part of the infrastructure package currently being developed by the U.S. Congress. Support of the Build America's Libraries Act, sponsored by Senator Jack Reed (S.127) and Representative Andy Levin (H.R. 1581) would provide \$5 billion to repair and construct modern library facilities across the nation, especially in underserved areas.

Treasurer
Karen Mellor
Chief of Library Services
Rhode Island Office of Library &
Information Services

Libraries are essential to educational and digital equity. The Build America's Libraries Act would enable libraries to rebuild, refurbish, and expand their facilities – as well as improve their digital infrastructure and purchase devices – to meet the needs of communities across the country. Libraries provide digital connectivity to those who otherwise do not have access and provide a ladder to economic opportunity for dislocated workers and marginalized populations.

Director
Randy Riley
State Librarian
Library of Michigan

In addition, community resilience is fostered in libraries and America's libraries, on average, are more than 40 years old. The demands to maintain accessible, secure, and tech-relevant facilities are ever present. In fact, this funding would help address infrastructure challenges faced by libraries such as accessibility barriers, technology capacity, and environmental hazards. Furthermore, the funding would strengthen these essential institutions for future natural disasters and advance the COVID-19 pandemic recovery in communities across the country.

Director
James Ritter
State Librarian
Maine State Library

An investment in libraries is an investment in the present and future, as it supports employment, literacy, health, and the overall economy. The economic and social dividends will result in gains many times more than the \$5 billion investment. Including libraries within Congress' infrastructure investment will transform communities in every state and territory, and especially marginalized communities, such as high-poverty areas, rural areas, and tribal nations.

Thank you for helping build stronger communities and fostering economic growth in our states through your support of libraries.

Sincerely,

Jennie Stapp
President