



The Voice of the Library Community

New York Library Association

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Testimony for Joint Hearing on Elementary Education
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My name is Briana McNamee.

I have the privilege of serving the New York Library Association as their Director of Government Relations and Advocacy. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today on behalf of our state's libraries and library systems as well as the more than 10 million New Yorkers who hold library cards.

This year – Governor Kathy Hochul broke a long-standing trend in her Executive Budget. For the first time in over six years-both library programs were not dramatically cut- only one was! This year's proposal includes:

- \$96.1M for State Library Aid
- \$14M for the State Library Construction Program
- The release of \$150K from the Love Your Library Fund

While the above depicts a moderate increase in our general aid (\$2M), the proposed allocation for the Construction Program is \$20M less than that of 2021 and is over \$1.4B short of the community need.

State Library Aid:

The State Library Aid program is the primary source of funding for New York's library systems, which provide shared services and resources to each library in New York. These system services ensure that every community, and every New Yorker, regardless of relative wealth, has access to quality library materials and services. Library system services are efficient, effective, and empower libraries. According to the State Education Department (SED), each dollar invested in the State Library Aid program returns seven dollars in local library services.

The unfortunate reality is that sustained underfunding has led to depleted services, degraded technology assets, and diminished educational programming.

The New York Library Association is requesting \$123.1M in State Library Aid this year.

Library Construction:

For the past several years, the Executive has slashed Library Construction Aid; the last two years by \$20M. As a result, every year, the Legislature has the responsibility to identify and resecure the aid. Unfortunately, this process has left the Program stagnant.

The State Division of Library Development estimates that library renovation and construction needs are \$1.5B statewide. Over 50% of public libraries in NYS are 60+ years old, and an additional 31% are 30+ years old. Investment in the Library Construction Aid program must be increased to address aging infrastructure, energy inefficient buildings and the evolving ways people use libraries.

NYLA is requesting a \$45M allocation to the state's Library Construction Program.

Love Your Library

The Love Your Library Fund was established nearly 17 years ago. There are two separate sources for the Fund; the first is a special license plate and the second is a contribution made via corporate or personal income tax return. The "Love Your Library Fund" is used exclusively to support the NY Statewide Summer Reading Program.

Unfortunately, since its creation, the accumulated funds have never been distributed.

With an act of the Legislature through the annual budget, monies can finally be disseminated throughout the state to library systems for the annual Summer Reading program.

Instructional Materials Aid

Instructional Materials Aid includes library materials, textbooks, software, and hardware. Aid for each is critical to ensure students have access to educational materials and technology.

Since 1994, the per pupil rate for library materials has only increased \$4.25. Currently, school districts are eligible to receive up to \$6.25 per pupil for those attending public and nonpublic schools within their boundaries for such materials.

District costs for hardware, software, textbooks, and library materials have increased substantially over the last 15 years.

The New York Library Association was pleased to see the Board of Regents include an increase to IMA to reflect inflation and make a moderate adjustment of \$2.05 to the per pupil rate.

We ask the Legislature to strongly consider the State & Non-State Aid proposals as approved by the Board of Regents.

The Future of Libraries:

Libraries cannot continue to serve their communities and students with the proposed budget. We implore the Legislature to invest in our state's libraries so that your constituents, our patrons, and our communities can thrive.

Library Aid: \$123.1M

Library Construction: \$45M