February 17, 2022

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
932 Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Speaker Heastie,

We write today to respectfully request an increase in funding for our public libraries in the Assembly FY22-23 one-house budget proposal. For many years the Assembly Majority has long supported adequate funding for New York State’s libraries and library systems. During these unprecedented times, these critical entities have continued to provide critical services, education, technology infrastructure, and access to information to over 19.5 million New Yorkers statewide, including more than 10 million who hold library cards. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries have stepped up across the state to provide vital services to communities including internet access for remote student learners, virtual programming for all ages, and access to important health and safety resources and information. Moreover, with a tremendous increase in electronic readership and skyrocketing costs associated with the licensure of electronic publications (E-Books), our public libraries need support now more than ever.

During each of the prior five years, the Executive Budget Proposal had called for reductions in library aid at times when our libraries needed assistance the most. While we are pleased that this year’s Executive Budget Proposal calls for an increase in aid to public libraries, a mere $2 million increase comes far too short of what is truly needed. To this end, we are requesting the following support:

**State Library Aid:**

The 2022-23 Executive Budget proposes to increase funding for Aid to Public Libraries by a mere $2 million for a total of $96.1 million. State Library Aid ensures that every community and every New Yorker has access to quality library materials and services, and according to the State Education Department, every dollar invested in the State Library Aid program yields seven dollars’ worth of local library services. Unfortunately, sustained underfunding has led to depleted services, degraded technology assets and diminished educational programming. We recommend the Assembly increase State Library Aid funding to **$123.1 million**.

**Library Construction Aid:**

For the past several years, the Executive has slashed Library Construction Aid at a time when statewide library renovation and construction needs are estimated to be $1.5 billion. Investment in the Library Construction Aid program must be increased to address aging infrastructure, energy inefficient buildings and the evolving ways that patrons use their libraries. We recommend the Assembly increase funding for the Library Construction Aid program to **$45 million**.

**A full restoration of $250,000 in funding for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and $75,000 in funding for the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center:**

The Executive Budget eliminates funding for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture ($250,000) and Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center ($75,000). We recommend restoring funding for both of these longstanding
cultural institutions.

**Love Your Library Funding:**

The Love Your Library Fund was established nearly 17 years ago which collects funding through special DMV-issued license plates as well as corporate or personal income tax returns. Since the fund was created, none of the accumulate funds have been distributed. Thankfully, the Executive has proposed that **$150,000** of this funding be earmarked for the Statewide Summer Reading Program; we agree with this proposal and ask that the Assembly Budget Proposal reflect this funding allocation as well.

By addressing the above-mentioned critical needs, we will be helping to ensure that our public libraries can continue to provide the critical services upon which all our constituents will continue to rely throughout the pandemic and in the years to come. As the Legislature continues developing strategies to reimagine New York’s economy in a post-COVID-19 world, it is essential for our library institutions to remain a vital component of that process. On behalf of our public libraries, library systems and patrons, we thank you for your continued efforts and look forward to working with you and our colleagues to ensure our libraries remain a cornerstone of collaboration, awareness, equity, and education for all New Yorkers now and in the future. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Jean-Pierre  
Member of Assembly, 11th District  
Chair, Committee on Libraries and Education Technology

John T. McDonald III  
Member of Assembly, 108th District

Inez E. Dickens  
Member of Assembly, 70th District

Mike Lawler  
Member of Assembly, 97th District

Marianne Buttenschon  
Member of Assembly, 119th District

Marjorie Byrnes  
Member of Assembly, 133rd District
Harry B. Bronson  
Member of Assembly, 138th District

Angelo J. Morinello  
Member of Assembly, 145th District

Michael J. Norris  
Member of Assembly, 144th District

William Conrad  
Member of Assembly, 140th District

Jennifer Lunsford  
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Member of Assembly, 113th District

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