2014 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA (NONBUDGET) TALKING POINTS

Library Construction Aid & Matching Provisions  
S.6329 Farley / A.8732 Thiele  
Retain current program guidelines on matching requirements to ensure libraries in economically disadvantaged areas are able to make needed capital improvements.

Background:  
The current language provides for up to a 75/25 state match on qualifying capital projects located in economically disadvantaged communities. (Match would revert to 50/50 on qualifying projects if sunset date is not extended.)

Impact:  
The current language is set to sunset in March 2015. This bill seeks to extend the sunset date to 2020. Many libraries with smaller annual budgets currently face difficulty in raising even the 25% match for vital infrastructure projects.

MTA Payroll Tax Exemption  
S.1891 Martins / A.1665 Abinanti  
This bill would put libraries on equal footing with other educational institutions by exempting public and association libraries, and library systems from the MTA Payroll Tax.

Background:  
Current law exempts some educational institutions like primary and secondary schools, but not public libraries. Though not exempt, currently libraries are reimbursed for MTA payroll tax costs at $1.3M annually. This amount was settled on several years ago, and in some cases did not fully cover expenditures. The reimbursement does not meet expenditures for several public library systems and has ceased to be an adequate remedy.

Impact:  
This measure would put libraries on equal footing with other local, public educational institutions regarding the MTA Commuter Tax.

Maintenance of Effort Waivers  
S.2857-B Farley  
Allow public library systems to apply for a waiver from maintenance of effort requirements for up to three years as determined by the NYS Commissioner of Education.

Background:  
Current law provides that if local sponsor support raised by taxation for a public library system and participating libraries, or a central library, in a twelve month period is less than 95% of the average raised in the two preceding twelve month periods, state aid shall be reduced by 25%. However, the SED Commissioner may grant a waiver from these provisions once in a five year period, for up to 2 consecutive calendar years in the event of local economic hardship, natural disaster or loss of state formula aid to local governments as outlined in state Finance Law.

Impact:  
This measure would seek to acknowledge the fiscal realities of local governments and municipal agencies. All waivers granted would continue to be reported to the Assembly, Senate and Division of the Budget.
Encourage Digital Literacy Education in our Schools

S.2855 Farley / A.8735 Thiele

Substitute language in Education Law, allowing school librarians to offer instruction in grades k-12 on “digital literacy”, as opposed to the dated and limited term “internet safety”. Digital literacy entails the skills needed to use technology, the internet and information in the 21st century.

**Background:** Education Law currently allows that instruction on “internet safety” may be provided by a certified school librarian, should a school choose to provide it. This bill does not require that digital literacy instruction be provided, nor that school librarians provide the instruction, but rather updates language in education law that school librarians are eligible to provide instruction in “digital literacy” should a district opt to provide it.

**Impact:** As “digital literacy” skills become increasingly integral to education, this measure affirms that school librarians are exceptionally well suited to deliver instruction on this content.

EDC Study on Economic Benefits of Public Libraries

S.5854 Farley / A.7666-A Kellner

This legislation would require the Empire State Development Corporation to conduct a study on the economic impact of public libraries and public library systems in New York State at least once every five years beginning on January 1, 2015.

**Background:** Areas of concentration are the return on investment New York State and local governments receive from public libraries and public library systems; the direct, indirect, and induced economic impact of all public library expenditures on the state and local economies; an examination of the resources, services, and programs provided to library patrons for career development; and an examination of the resources, services, and programs provided to current and prospective business owners.

**Impact:** New York’s libraries generate significant economic activity both by serving as active community centers that fuel neighborhood desirability, and as an educational resource that provides low-cost workforce development and intellectual enrichment to its patrons. This study would put the best information in the hands of policymakers as they seek to determine what level of funding is appropriate for libraries of the 21st century.

Expand Access to School Libraries and Librarians

Students with access to school libraries staffed by certified School Library Media Specialists consistently score higher on tests by the fourth grade.

**Background:** Currently, elementary schools are not required to staff a certified School Library Media Specialist, and secondary schools are only required to do so in Commissioner’s Education Regulations, rather than by Education Law. Many schools are in violation of the Commissioner’s regulations, proving the inadequacy of the non-statutory requirement. There is an active lawsuit to compel schools’ compliance, and the State Education Department to enforce the regulation.

**Impact:** According to a study conducted at Syracuse University, students with access to school libraries staffed by certified School Library Media Specialists consistently score 15-20% higher in English Language Arts tests by fourth grade. Certified School Library Media Specialists provide technology to the entire school community and the necessary instruction in research methods to find the most reliable information and how to use information ethically. This is digital literacy, and it is absolutely key to establishing critical and creative thinking.

Taxpayer Access to Publicly-Funded Research

S.4050-A Robach / A.180 Hevesi

Require publicly-funded research that has been published in peer-reviewed journals to be made available online by the state agencies that underwrite such research.

**Background:** Currently NYS funds research at many public and private institutions; when published libraries must expend state funds for access to the research that was funded by tax dollars. This bill seeks to eliminate that redundancy.

**Impact:** Follows the federal example in promoting open access to government funded research and will position New York as the first open access state in the nation by making the published results of commissioned research electronically available to all.