February 12, 2021

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 FY21-22 one-house budget proposal. For many years the Assembly has long supported adequate funding for our libraries, and in these unprecedented times, New York’s libraries and library systems have continued to provide critical services, education, technology infrastructure and access to information for over 19.5 million New Yorkers statewide. 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.

Unfortunately, for the fifth year in a row, the Executive Budget Proposal calls for a reduction in library aid at a time when our libraries need assistance the most. These continued reductions come at a time when libraries are facing millions of dollars in unforeseen costs as they adjust operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; earlier this fall, the New York Library Association distributed a survey to libraries across the state to determine these expenditures and found that on average, libraries spent over $6,500 on items like PPE, plexiglass and HVAC upgrades. Pursuant to these circumstances, we are requesting the following support:

State Library Aid:
The 2021-22 Executive Budget proposes to decrease funding for Aid to Public Libraries by $7.1 million dollars for a total of $87 million dollars. We recommend the Assembly propose a full restoration of $4.6M in Aid to Public Libraries, plus an additional increase to $123.1M for total State Library Aid.

Library Construction Aid:
We recommend the Senate continue its commitment to improving our library facilities across New York State and provide an additional $31 million for library construction aid for a total of $45 million with a focus on libraries addressing digital equity needs in their community. This funding will support maintenance, renovation, and expansion of existing facilities and new construction of public libraries throughout the state.

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.

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.

Warm regards,

Kimberly Jean-Pierre
Member of Assembly
11th Assembly District

Assemblymember Gina Sillitti
16th Assembly District

Assemblymember William B. Magnarelli
129th Assembly District

Assemblymember Inez E. Dickens
70th Assembly District

Assemblymember Carrie Woerner
113th Assembly District

Assemblymember Michael Montesano
15th Assembly District

Assemblymember John T. McDonald III
108th Assembly District

Assemblymember Joseph M. Giglio
148th Assembly District
Assemblymember Karen McMahon
146th Assembly District

Assemblymember Jake Ashby
107th Assembly District

Assemblymember Judy Griffin
21st Assembly District

Assemblymember Jeffrion L. Aubry
35th Assembly District

Assemblymember Chris Tague
102nd Assembly District

Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon
52nd Assembly District

Assemblymember John K. Mikulin
17th Assembly District

Assemblymember Joe DeStefano
3rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Karl Brabenc
98th Assembly District
Assemblymember Chris Burdick
93rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Marjorie Byrnes
133rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Edward P. Ra
19th Assembly District

Assemblymember Amy Paulin
88th Assembly District

Assemblymember Donna A. Lupardo
123rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Anna R. Kelles
125th Assembly District

Assemblymember Aileen M. Gunther
100th Assembly District

Assemblymember Rebecca A. Seawright
76th Assembly District

Assemblymember Michael J. Norris
144th Assembly District
Assemblymember Sandy Galef
95th Assembly District

Assemblymember Michaille C. Solages
22nd Assembly District

Assemblymember Mary Beth Walsh
112th Assembly District

Assemblymember John Salka
121st Assembly District

Assemblymember Steve Englebright
4th Assembly District

Assemblymember Monica P. Wallace
143rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Maritza Davila
53rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Kenneth Zebrowski
96th Assembly District

Assemblymember Fred W. Thiele, Jr.
1st Assembly District
Assemblymember Pamela J. Hunter
128th Assembly District

Assemblymember Phil Steck
110th Assembly District

Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson
138th Assembly District

Assemblymember Marianne Buttenschon
119th Assembly District

Assemblymember Billy Jones
115th Assembly District

Assemblymember Stefani Zinerman
56th Assembly District

Assemblymember Charles Barron
60th Assembly District

Assemblymember Jonathan G. Jacobson
104th Assembly District
Assemblymember Jennifer Lunsford
135th Assembly District

Assemblymember Josh Jensen
134th Assembly District

Assemblymember Philip A. Palmesano
132nd Assembly District

Assemblymember Steven Otis
91st Assembly District

Assemblymember Steve Stern
10th Assembly District

Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani
36th Assembly District

Assemblymember Andy Goodell
150th Assembly District

Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick
66th Assembly District

Assemblymember Catherine Nolan
37th Assembly District
Assemblywoman Sarah Clark
136th Assembly District

Assemblymember Brian Manktelow
130th Assembly District

Assemblymember Angelo Santabarbara
111th Assembly District

Assemblymember Didi Barrett
106th Assembly District

Assemblymember Emily Gallagher
50th Assembly District

Assemblymember Chantel Jackson
79th Assembly District

Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou
65th Assembly District

Assemblymember Charles D. Lavine
13th Assembly District

Assemblymember Kevin M. Byrne
94th Assembly District
Assemblymember Latrice Walker
55th Assembly District

Assemblymember N. Nick Perry
58th Assembly District