

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Re: COVID-19 Relief for America's Libraries

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

I write on behalf of the Association of American Publishers ("AAP") to express our members support for providing COVID-19 financial relief to our nation's public libraries. We respectfully request that such assistance be provided directly to State and local government authorities to aid in their support of essential public services during the crisis created by the pandemic and its impact on our economy.

AAP represents our nation's leading book, journal, and education publishers -- including major commercial houses, small and independent houses, and university presses and other noncommercial scholarly publishers -- on matters of law and public policy.

Publishers and libraries have an enduring marketplace partnership that has helped sustain the pivotal role of public libraries as key local resources for individuals who wish to access -- free of charge -- the information, entertainment and knowledge that publishers invest in and make available to the public through a variety of commercially sustainable market models, including print books, e-books, and audio books. Moreover, AAP and its members appreciate the fact that public libraries are vital, multi-faceted organizations in their respective communities. Now we are aware that, due to adverse health and economic effects of the pandemic, the ability of public libraries to continue providing their critical social services through the use of their facilities for local meetings, communications, and collection and distribution activities is threatened by the likely need to make severe cuts in staffing, purchases, and the availability of their premises.

We understand that the American Library Association (ALA) and its supporters are requesting financial relief for America's public libraries in the next iteration of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. We also understand that you have received bipartisan letters of support from some House and Senate members for ALA's request to provide \$2 billion in "fiscal stabilization" funding for libraries through the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Insofar as the ALA acknowledges that more than 92% of public library budgets comes from State and local sources, which themselves are greatly burdened by unanticipated costs and lost revenues from COVID-19, AAP urges Congress to provide the requested relief to public libraries as part of a package of financial relief for the State and local governments that would otherwise address the libraries' needs.

Providing such emergency funding to public libraries in this manner, rather than through the IMLS grant processes through which libraries -- and museums -- may ordinarily apply for special federal funding, will acknowledge that the nation's public libraries are part of the multijurisdictional state,

county, city and municipal government system that is the *sine qua non* of the principle of federalism within our national constitutional structure under which local community “first responders” including police, fire, transit, sanitation, health and other essential public services are battling the pandemic with federal support.

Moreover, it will also allow for the closer oversight of the spending of such funding that is necessary and appropriate to ensure it is focused on local community needs required by the pandemic emergency and recovery, rather than on political advocacy and public policy lobbying activities that generally would be viewed as improper and even abusive uses of such funding during the current crisis.

On behalf of AAP and its members, I want to thank you for focusing your leadership on addressing the needs of all Americans where they live and work during this unprecedented health and economic crisis, and for giving the views of the AAP in support of relief for public libraries your careful consideration.

Sincerely,



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