

ALA American Library Association

November 27, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chair
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

The American Library Association (ALA) is writing to express our strong support for the passage of S. 3530, the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) scheduled for Committee mark up this week. We thank the Committee for acting on this important legislation.

ALA is the largest library association in the world and trusted voice for our nation's 120,000 public, academic, school, research and special libraries. Every year, 1.5 billion in-person visits are made to public libraries alone. Every day, Americans visit their local library for access to the internet, children and adult literacy programs, workforce training, and access to essential information on a wide range of topics. More than 92 percent of public libraries offer services that help patrons conduct job searches. In rural areas, libraries often serve as their communities only no-fee internet connection and computing services.

The MLSA will reauthorize the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the only direct source of federal funding benefiting U.S. libraries. The stated mission of IMLS — to “inspire libraries to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement” — is crucial to the success of our country's 120,000 libraries, which serve constituents in every state and congressional district, from rural America to our nation's suburbs and cities.

The MLSA also reauthorizes several important programs for America's communities and which are administered by IMLS, including: Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA); Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program; Grants to State Library Agencies; National Leadership Grants; and library services for Native Americans.

An improvement to MLSA addresses a needed adjustment to the base allotment to each State Library Administrative Agency, under the LSTA Grants to States Program. Our state partners and nearly 60,000 ALA members back this change.

LSTA grants allow states to maintain local implementation of talking book services, which directly benefit persons who are blind, visually impaired, or physically handicapped by providing access to reading materials in alternate formats. As there is no dedicated funding stream for individuals with print disabilities at the local or state level, LSTA grants fill this need.

Every year, LSTA obtains strong bipartisan support through “Dear Appropriator” letters in the Senate. This year the LSTA letter was signed by 46 senators from both sides of the aisle.

The ALA urges the Senate HELP Committee to pass S. 3530.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Kathi Kromer" in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Kathi Kromer
Associate Executive Director, Public Policy and Advocacy
American Library Association