

Dear Chair and Distinguished Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I write to you today in strong support of sustained and increased funding for school libraries. For 27 of my 30 years in education, I have served as a school librarian at both the elementary and middle school levels. In that time, I have had the extraordinary privilege of witnessing how access to a vibrant, professionally staffed library can shape a child's academic path and personal growth. It is an experience that has reaffirmed for me, year after year, that school libraries are not supplemental to education—they are foundational.

In my career, I have seen students discover themselves in books. I have watched hesitant readers gain confidence after finding stories that reflect their lives and experiences. I have observed children engage in thoughtful discourse, challenge assumptions, and grow in empathy simply because literature opened a window into another world. A school library is often the one place in a building where every student feels welcome. It is a safe haven where students can immerse themselves in reading, explore subjects they are passionate about, and connect with peers who share their interests and values.

The research confirms what I have witnessed throughout my career. Schools with full-time certified librarians consistently show stronger reading outcomes. In several statewide studies, schools with certified librarians reported up to 35 percent more students scoring proficient or above on standardized reading tests. Other analyses show measurable gains—around an 8 percent increase—in students achieving advanced reading scores when a certified librarian is part of the instructional team. These are not small differences. They represent real children gaining the literacy skills that underpin every other subject they will encounter.

Despite the clear evidence of impact, access to school library services remains inequitable. There are Public schools within my district and across the state that do not have a full-time certified librarian, and many others that operate without a fully functioning library program. These gaps disproportionately affect students who often rely most heavily on their school library for access to books, technology, and academic support. Our children DESERVE better. At the same time, library budgets are often modest or in cases like mine, nonexistent—to serve hundreds of students. My funding comes from grants I explore and write, DonorsChoose projects I post, and donations I receive or books I purchase myself for my students to read and share. Our children DESERVE better.

When we fund school libraries, we are funding opportunity. We are funding equitable access to information. We are funding a professional educator trained to support literacy, inquiry, and critical thinking. We are funding a safe space where students can explore who they are and who they might become.

After nearly three decades in this profession, I can say without hesitation that school libraries change trajectories. Sometimes the change is dramatic and immediate. More often, it is gradual—a child reads more confidently, asks better questions, engages more thoughtfully in discussion. Those small shifts accumulate, and over time they shape capable, informed adults.

I respectfully urge this Committee to protect and strengthen funding for school library programs and to support policies that ensure every school has access to a certified librarian. The investment is modest compared to the return: stronger readers, better-informed citizens, and students prepared not just to pass tests, but to participate meaningfully in our democracy.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and for your commitment to the students we serve.

Respectfully,

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