



CHIEF OFFICERS OF STATE LIBRARY AGENCIES

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The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chair, Health Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Health Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

November 27, 2018

Dear Chair and Ranking Member:

The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) is an independent organization whose members are the heads of state library administrative agencies, responsible for developing and sustaining effective, robust library services to meet the needs of communities across the United States. Its members include all 50 states, the District of Columbia and several territories. COSLA's reach extends into virtually every public library in the United States, as well as thousands of school and academic libraries. COSLA provides leadership on issues of common concern and national interest and initiates cooperative action for the improvement of library services to the people of the United States.

COSLA and its members greatly appreciate the time and attention the Senate HELP Committee has given S.3530, the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018 (MLSA), and we urge its swift passage by the current Congress. The bipartisan support for S.3530 is testament to the important role libraries play in every community across the country. S.3530 will reauthorize the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and several important programs for libraries that are administered through it, including the Grants to States program.

For more than 62 years Grants to States and its predecessor programs have supported the delivery of library services in the U.S. These grants, determined through a population-based formula and amplified through a 34 percent state match and local funding, have demonstrated impact in every state and territory in the U.S. Each state and territory identifies the most appropriate uses of funds, implementing services and activities to meet their communities' unique economic, educational, and civic needs. The return on investment of these federal funds is substantial, especially when leveraged with the state match and local funding.

S.3530 addresses a much-needed adjustment to the Grants to States program by increasing the minimum allotment for states and territories while ensuring that no state or territory would receive a reduced allocation. This change would be equitable and enhance the ability of states and territories to strengthen library services locally. The health of communities is enhanced when we have strong libraries that provide opportunities for learning 21st-century skills and literacies, connecting people to the world of information and ideas, and creating spaces for community engagement.

COSLA recognizes several additional benefits offered by S.3530:


- Explicit allowance for grant funds to be used to help libraries prepare for and provide services

- after a disaster or emergency;
- Greater use of data-driven tools to measure the impact and maximize the effectiveness of library services; and
- Additional provisions to enable more Native American tribes to participate in IMLS grant programs.

S.3530 is critical to ensuring federal support for our nation's libraries. The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies urge its swift passage by the current Congress to ensure libraries are funded and able to continue strengthening their programs and services for the people of the United States.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dorothy J. Chernick".

Executive Director
Chief Officers of State Library Agencies