

December 6, 2018
Honorable Senator Josh Hawley
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Hawley,

Congratulations on your recent win in the November election and your appointment as Missouri's newest senator in the United States Senate. As you begin your service as senator, I urge you to consider how you can support Missouri residents and families by strengthening and supporting Missouri's libraries.

Libraries are vital to vibrant communities. Public libraries enrich and strengthen America's communities, and strong communities strengthen our nation. Funding allows libraries to provide programs, access to technology and the internet, and a place to collaborate. The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) provides federal funds to libraries. One way to show your support of libraries to Missouri residents is by signing the FY20 LSTA support letter and by providing funding through approval of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Library programs enrich and educate American people. The library is a place dedicated to helping people engage in lifelong learning. Beginning in early childhood, libraries improve literacy through programs such as story time, kindergarten readiness, homework support, and summer reading programs. They support adult education by providing programs such as book clubs, workshops, lectures, English classes, makerspaces, and events. Libraries also serve to help patrons become educated and aware of political processes and encourage patrons to vote. Library programs improve literacy, support continuing education, strengthen families, and help inform citizens.

As technology continues to improve, libraries help Americans adapt to and learn these technologies to improve their lives. Libraries are bridging the digital divide by providing access to high-speed internet. The 2015 Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Public Library survey found that 99% of public libraries provide free internet access to patrons. Librarians teach classes to help people learn computer applications, how to use the internet and email, how to build websites and more. They also provide support for employment by helping patrons with resumes, online job searching and job applications. Libraries provide essential help to e-government through tax help, navigating healthcare, and understanding benefits. Libraries play a crucial role in providing technology to their communities, especially to those in underserved and disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Libraries adapt to serve the needs of their communities. As technology changes the way we access information, journals and even books, libraries recognize the technological shift and are creating physical space for their patrons to collaborate. Libraries encourage small businesses and provide workshops, space to gather, and information to succeed which strengthens the American economy. Libraries are becoming places to interact and engage with their communities and creating events to strengthen their communities. Libraries will continue to provide physical spaces for their community to gather.

Library funding comes mostly from local and state sources. The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) is the one program that is federally funded to help states support

libraries and it requires states to match federal funds. LSTA funds are part of the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. IMLS allocates the funds to states which divide monetary resources through grants and agreements to support all types of libraries within the state. These resources enrich and strengthen the residents of Missouri. Since 1997, IMLS has awarded 248 grants to libraries and museums within the state of Missouri, seven of which were awarded in 2018. Of the seven, four were given to museums and three to libraries.

I urge you to please sign the FY20 LSTA support letter and continue to provide or increase funding for LSTA by approving the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Your support of federal funding for libraries will benefit the education, literacy, and small business efforts of Missouri residents and families. Funding endows libraries with the ability to help sustain and create vibrant communities. Vibrant and strong communities are at the core of our great nation.

Thank you for serving Missouri residents and families, and for your consideration in strengthening Missouri's libraries.

Sincerely,

Wendy T. Dawson
University of Missouri Master of Library and Information Science student
2109 Red Oak Ln
Liberty, MO 64068
wd7t6@mail.missouri.edu