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July 1, 2020

The Honorable Governor Ron DeSantis
Office of the Governor
State of Florida, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis,

On behalf of the Florida Library Association (FLA) Board of Directors and the membership-at-large, we wish to share with you our surprise and disappointment upon learning that several library funding programs have been vetoed from the state's 2020-2021 budget.

We understand the colossal pressure you faced in making difficult decisions to balance Florida's state budget. During these unprecedented times, it is understandable that tough choices be made amid an historic health pandemic, and subsequent economic upheaval.

Of interest to FLA is the elimination of the Complete Florida Plus Program, which includes ALL funding for the Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative (FALSC), and \$2 million to Florida's Multitype Library Cooperatives.

FALSC's resources and services are available to assist nearly 1.3 million students, faculty, and staff throughout Florida. The decision to veto appropriation 161A has eliminated \$29 million in Complete Florida Plus Program funding, which leaves Florida without FALSC, Distance Learning and Student Services, and the Complete Florida Degree Initiative. FALSC is critical in providing access to information resources for distance learning, and its elimination will leave Florida's public institutions stranded during the COVID-19 crisis.

Florida's Multitype Library Cooperatives provide important services to Florida libraries and Floridians that help them keep up with the rapidly changing world of technology and information. They provide essential training to library staff, support interlibrary loan and a delivery service among libraries, provide electronic resources like popular e-books and reference material, help them with technology like digitization of community resources, video production and virtual reality, and help libraries engage with their communities.

Libraries provide imperative information and resources that assist communities as they combat these twin crises, the health pandemic and economic turmoil. Libraries continue to act as economic recovery centers, whether on a large scale such as reemployment-form distribution

at many libraries this spring, or on a more personalized basis, providing computers for the simple act of applying for a much-needed job.

Further, libraries have provided countless opportunities for K-12 and university students as these groups (and their instructors and parents) were forced into new educational platforms and schedules were upended. As remote learning became the status quo for all educational partners, libraries bridged that education gap by extending their services to meet all types of users at their point of need, ensuring access and creating new ways for all library users to complete courses, seek economic help and continue to participate in their communities.

While we are disappointed with the recent vetoes, we remain grateful for your signature related to the incredibly important *State Aid to Public Libraries* grant program administered through the Department of State, Division of Library & Information Services. This funding directly benefits every public library in Florida and provides funds for valuable services and programs in communities across the state.

We look forward to working with you and the Legislature on preserving these important library funding programs in future.

Sincerely,



Laura I. Spears, PhD
President



Lisa J. O'Donnell, CAE
Executive Director