



The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, United States House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, United States House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2020

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer and Leader McCarthy:

The Urban Libraries Council and the ULC member library systems – serving over 100 million Americans – recognize your leadership in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on our nation’s citizens. Public libraries are standing on the front lines to support their communities and help citizens navigate this health crisis. We are pivoting to bring our in-person services and work online, partnering with public schools to support distance learning for children, addressing the digital divide by loaning hotspots, and helping entrepreneurs and small businesses as they struggle to stay afloat. Now more than ever, libraries and their communities need strong partnerships and financial support from all levels of government.

ULC urges Congress to ensure that future legislation designed to support coronavirus relief and recovery includes significant funding provided directly to local governments. While the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act all provide much-needed flexibility and funding for local governments, there remains significant need for cities, counties, special districts and other local government systems to receive increased and direct financial support in this extraordinary time.

According to the [National Association of Counties](#), U.S. counties annually invest more than \$83 billion in community health systems and \$134 billion in infrastructure and public institutions, including public libraries. The [National League of Cities](#) estimates that our country’s cities, towns and villages will need more than \$250 billion in emergency funding to combat COVID-19 and stabilize their communities. Without additional and direct financial support, our nation’s cities, counties and other local governments will be unable to effectively stem the spread of the disease and lessen its impact on the local economy and workforce. Local governments cannot rely completely on their state governments to provide this support – the need is too significant, and too urgent.

Local governments and their libraries need emergency funds to provide equitable learning opportunities for youth in this time of school closures and social distancing. Stimulus funding will allow city and county agencies to deliver services to vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, including seniors, low-income families and homeless individuals. Agencies and local businesses will be able to keep their doors open and avoid layoffs, helping to stabilize the economy and community support networks.

Public libraries have an essential role to play in every area of local efforts to combat the spread of the coronavirus, and they will continue to be crucial leaders in driving recovery efforts. Libraries are vital onramps to life in the digital age, providing free access to the internet and digital tools, and actively working to extend the reach of broadband and Wi-Fi hotspots in their communities. In times of emergency, libraries partner closely with local schools and disaster relief organizations to distribute meals, organize blood drives, provide child care services for first responders and perform a wide array of other critical activities.

Our nation's libraries are ready – and actively engaged in – doing their part to safeguard citizens and strengthen the resiliency of their communities. Direct and increased federal funding for local governments is necessary to make this work possible. For more information about how public libraries are serving their communities in this difficult time, please visit urbanlibraries.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SBenton', with a stylized, cursive script.

Susan Benton
President & CEO
Urban Libraries Council