



To the Honorable Muriel Bowser, Mayor, Washington, D.C.

CC: Chancellor Ferebee, Deputy Mayor of Education Paul Kihn, and Honorable Members of the DC Council

Dear Mayor,

The District of Columbia Library Association (DCLA) represents nearly 100 school librarian members and hundreds of other librarians and library workers through professional development and advocacy activities. Our school librarian members are at work every day in schools in all eight wards to realize the educational goals for District of Columbia Public Schools, D.C. Public Charter Schools, and private schools. We are focused on creating and sustaining effective school library programs and engaging with students, families, and other educators in their success. We are committed to supporting student achievement and fulfilling state standards as educators.

The DCLA Executive Board is writing today to express our significant concerns with the recent policy by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education that allows principals to “excess” school librarian positions at the building level. We believe that any cuts to school librarian positions are unwise and inappropriate given the challenges that DC Public Schools are facing during COVID and in the recovery. As you know, the DCPS has received significant direct financial support for continuity of operations in the recent American Rescue Plan (ARP) through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER). This ESSER funding is specifically intended to not only help reopen schools safely but it is also to be used to avoid layoffs and hire new staff to address students’ academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs. This staff-retention use of ESSER funds in the ARP is consistent with guidance issued by the US Department of Education and extends back to ESSER I in the CARES Act and ESSER II in the CRRSA Act.

With a likely return to in-person instruction next year, we believe that it is timely and important for the District of Columbia Public Schools to align its budget and staffing plan to fully implement current regulations about school library programs and positions across the system. During the COVID-pivot, school librarians in Washington D.C. were instrumental in helping schools make the transition to full remote learning in the Spring of 2020 and then to hybrid in the Fall of 2020. As we continue to move through this time, our hope is to see the District of Columbia Public Schools strengthen its support of school librarians. We strongly encourage DCPS to prioritize retaining school librarians and collections in its budget.

According to an extensive research digested and published in Phi Delta Kappan [journal](#), the presence of an effective school library programs along with schoolwide inquiry learning and

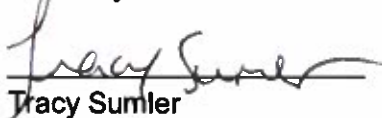
information literacy are closely linked to student success. Additionally, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National School Library Standards from 2018 has laid out seven foundational rubrics for effective school library programs that we should all aspire to. These standards include supporting a learning environment of inquiry and literacy that is focused on equity, inclusion, and access. The AASL Standards demonstrate that school librarians facilitate both student achievement and collaboration among educators while focusing on important topics like information literacy that prepares students for work and life.

During the current COVID-disrupted school year, our members have experienced first-hand all the challenges of being an educator. Because of necessary reassignments, many of our members are currently working outside of library programs as online classroom teachers or other instructional support roles. As the 2021-2022 school year begins to come into focus, DCLA would like to work with Chancellor Ferebee, Deputy Mayor for Education Kihn, and principals across the system to see all school librarians returned to school libraries. As a professional community, our members are aligned toward student achievement now and in the future. Restoring all school librarians to libraries next school year will be the best way to ensure academic success for our students.

DCLA is also interested in working with your office, City Council, and the DC State Board of Education to review and engage current policies concerning school librarians and effective school library programs across the system. We are concerned that current regulations have been disrupted by COVID and DCLA encourages DCPS to engage in a reasonable effort to re-engage these regulations in the 2021-2022 school year.

Over the next several academic years, we will look to work with your office to support student achievement by increasing the number of school librarians and the presence of school librarians in primary as well as secondary schools. As an organization, the District of Columbia Library Association is aligned in principle and practice with the goals of the American Library Association and American Association of School Librarians. As educators, our members are concerned with helping COVID-impacted students and their families reverse learning losses and maintain grade-level reading skills. We hope to collaborate with you and DCPS leadership in support of student growth and achievement.

Sincerely,



Tracy Sumler

Acting President, District of Columbia Library Association