

To: Rep. Dave Monson and members of the House Appropriations Committee - Education and Environment Division

RE: HB1013

I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB1013 and the North Dakota State Library's proposed budget.

During spring 2020, I had the opportunity to represent North Dakota libraries on the Shared E-Resources Task Force that negotiated contracts for electronic library resources for North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota. One thing that quickly became apparent was the need to serve multiple library types, maintain access to the most popular resources, and address emerging needs without an increase in spending would be a near impossible task. It was eye opening to see beyond the needs of the patrons I serve directly and see the big picture of how many demands are placed on the State Library's resources by library patrons of North Dakota. During the evaluation and negotiation process, we were tasked with maintaining current academic and news subscriptions while also adding resources that support early literacy, meet citizen demand for digital audiobooks, and address the needs of English learners. The North Dakota State Library's budget is essential to supporting the information and educational needs of the people of this state.

As the Library Coordinator for Fargo Public Schools, I can attest that cuts to the North Dakota State Library's budget often results in an increase in spending for the school district or reduced access to quality information resources for students. The district relies heavily on the quality subscription electronic resources provided by the state for K-12 student research projects. If the State Library is no longer able to subscribe to a resource, we are faced with the prospect of doing without or purchasing the resource independently. While this has always been true, participating in remote learning during the past year has increased our reliance on these electronic resources. When students no longer had access to print materials in their classrooms and school libraries, teachers and librarians had few other options.

Finally, as current president of the North Dakota Library Association, it is my duty to advocate for libraries of all types across the state. I watched on social media as my librarian colleagues adapted their services and implemented innovative new programming during the COVID-19 pandemic. Behind the scenes, the North Dakota State Library was supporting these rapid changes through Library Vision grants focused on responding to the pandemic and activities such as sponsoring and facilitating regular virtual meetings among librarians who struggled with how best to serve their patrons during this unprecedented time. Without the support of the North Dakota State Library, libraries would have been left to navigate topics such as CDC guidelines in the workplace, quarantining of materials, curbside services, and virtual storytime on their own.

The North Dakota State Library provides essential services to the people of North Dakota and I urge you to fully fund their budget proposal by supporting HB1013.

Amy Soma

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