

**TESTIMONY ON HB1013
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
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Dear Chairman Holmberg & Members of the Committee,

I am Mary Soucie, State Librarian of North Dakota, and I am giving testimony in support of our agency's budget bill, HB1013. Libraries continue to play a vital role in today's world. Libraries enrich the communities that they serve by supporting lifelong learning, workforce development, and student's educational and research needs. Libraries faced challenges in 2020 like so many entities but I am proud to say that North Dakota Libraries quickly pivoted and were able to provide much needed services to their communities. Libraries across the state began home delivery, curbside pickup of physical library materials and increased the e-materials offered. The State Library offered curbside pickup or mail delivery for our local Bismarck-Mandan-Lincoln area patrons and continued to mail library materials directly to patrons across the state. Libraries offered "take and make" craft kits and virtual programs- both live and pre-recorded for all ages, assisted people with completing the census, and provided needed printing services for patrons through email and

contactless pickup. The State Library sponsored our first ever Virtual Statewide Summer Learning Program Kickoff Week; libraries of all types from across the state partnered with the State Library on this innovative and unique program and have asked us to continue it. Libraries are more important than ever as showcased by the increase in the usage of databases and e-materials.

Libraries remain one of the few institutions that serve everyone regardless of age, race, religion, economic status, or education level achieved. The libraries in North Dakota have a long history of working together to share resources and services to meet the needs of citizens across the state. The North Dakota State Library works together with all types of libraries to offer statewide services to North Dakota residents.

Our budget request supports the services that the State Library offers to libraries and patrons throughout North Dakota. For the library community we provide continuing education, advisory services and training to librarians from public, school, academic and special libraries; for citizens we provide digitization and reference services. We coordinate statewide services such as InterLibrary Loan, Statewide Cataloging, and Talking Books Service for the visually impaired, as well as the purchase of Online Library Resources (OLRs). Online Library Resources, or databases,

provide credible information to students and citizens as well as enrichment opportunities for people of all ages. Universal Class, which includes over 500 courses on a variety of topics including business and personal interests was used extensively during the pandemic while people were staying home and looking for ways to improve their lives and fill their time; some people were even able to use Universal Class as a source for professional development. In December of 2020, the State Library joined Library2Go, a digital consortium of North Dakota Public Libraries, and migrated our e-books to a new platform which greatly improved the access to these materials because library patrons across the state now have a single collection to search instead of separate collections. All North Dakota citizens have access to these materials either through their local public library if the library belongs to Library2Go or through the State Library. By coordinating the purchases of the OLRs and e-materials, we achieve savings over \$17.6M. If the databases were purchased separately by each library that participates, the total cost would be over \$18M; we collectively pay \$488,336. Public and school libraries have indicated that they would not be able to provide access to these much-needed online library resources without the coordinated purchases.

The budget approved by the House funds State Aid for Public Libraries and Library Vision grants at the 2019-21 levels of \$1,737,582 and \$237,500, respectively. Both of these are very important to the North Dakota library community. State Aid funds are used to improve collections, provide innovative library programming, and support communities. Library Vision grants support our statewide resource sharing network, improved technology and collections, and increased bandwidth to support community needs. All competitive Library Vision grant opportunities include a matching component, increasing the impact of the state's investment. In 2020, we offered two rounds of a COVID Response Grant which assisted North Dakota libraries in responding to the coronavirus pandemic; to help libraries prepare to reopen to the public and to adapt their services for reducing the impact of COVID-19. Many of the recipients said that these grants enabled them to re-open to the public. In 2019 we offered a Network Infrastructure grant for public libraries. Our IT staff is running new CAT6 cabling, updating network equipment, improving Wi-fi access; we have invested a total of \$25,000 for this grant and estimate that we have saved local libraries well over \$150,000 in equipment and labor costs. Additional grant categories during this biennium included partnerships, technology, professional development and collection development.

We anticipate receiving a 10% increase in our federal funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which will total approximately \$200,000 for the biennium. These monies will be used to increase services to the library community. The recently adopted American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) includes monies for libraries. NDSL will receive an additional \$2,166,750 from IMLS during the 2021-23 biennium. These funds do not require an additional match or maintenance of effort component. The State Library also received \$68,860 in CARES Act monies from IMLS. These funds must be expended by September 30, 2021. The State Library paid for an online resource, BeanStack, for public libraries to use when they switched the Summer Learning Program to an online format during the pandemic. The remaining monies will be spent to enable libraries to increase technology services to their communities.

The State Library is on track to deliver services using all 2019-21 appropriated funding except for the remaining salary from a currently vacant position.

One-time funding during the current biennium totaling \$323,970 was for a Coding Grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to provide public libraries the ability to organize coding clubs for

students to improve computer and coding skills. There are no one-time funding requests for the 2021-23 biennium.

The recommendation from the House eliminates a Library Associate I position. We will be able to accommodate the loss of this position.

We are very grateful for the legislative support for libraries in the past and look forward to continued support. Libraries are far more than buildings that house books. They are the heart of every community. Libraries are centers for social and cultural gatherings, lifelong learning advocates, and contributors in community innovation. Therefore, investing in libraries is also investing in the communities in which the libraries serve. On behalf of the North Dakota State Library, we recommend HB1013 as it relates to the State Library receive a Do Pass as it is written. Thank you for your time and attention.