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December 26, 2022

Amit S. Bagga, Deputy Secretary to the Governor, Intergovernmental Affairs  
Chatodd Floyd, Deputy Secretary for Legislative Affairs & Policy  
Michael Mastroianni, Assistant Secretary for Education  
NYS State Capital Bldg.  
Albany, NY 12224

Mr. Bagga, Mr. Floyd, and Mr. Mastroianni,

We are writing to you today in full support of the inclusion of the Municipal Ballot Petition Reduction bill in the Executive Budget. This bill has been noted as a priority by the New York State Board of Regents, the New York State Library, and the New York Library Association.

This bill would align the petition signature requirement for libraries using a municipal ballot approach with the 25-signature requirement in place for libraries using a school district ballot approach for their budget proposals.

In our System, more than half of our member libraries use this mechanism to secure voter-directed operating aid. This is a common path for smaller, rural libraries as well as libraries in areas where the concentration of libraries formed by the state requires smaller units than school districts. It prevents double-taxation and ensures that residents benefiting from a library's services can directly have a say over how they are taxed for these services.

The current law is burdensome and getting increasingly burdensome. With the current requirement requiring 10% of the number of voters that voted in the last gubernatorial election to sign a petition – *just to get on the ballot* – these smaller libraries are asked to take on a huge amount of work – *just to get on the ballot*. This prevents some of the smaller libraries from holding routine votes which compromises their funding, meaning they struggle to keep up with basic cost of living increases and staying competitive in salary and benefits offered. This is having a chronic, negative impact on their operations and thereby denigrating services and programs offered to communities.

This raises the question of why these libraries are held to such a high standard when other libraries, serving much larger service areas such as school districts, only need 25 signatures to get on the ballot. There should be parity in the process, particularly given that municipalities are usually much smaller units than school districts. Where is the equity? This punishes rural communities and keeps them struggling to keep their proverbial heads above water. There should be equity in process, regardless of library type and service area.

Voters still have their say on Election Day. Whether 25 folks sign a petition or 500, all voters have a say on the final outcome.

We urge the Governor to include this election reform within the 2023 budget to support libraries impacted by this current procedure so they can help the millions of New Yorkers they are chartered to serve.

Sincerely,

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Executive Director, Mid-Hudson Library System

Victoria Herow, Director, Amenia Free Library

Kristen Salierno, Director, Howland Public Library (Beacon)

Carol Fortier, Director, Beekman Library

Gina Loprinzo, Director, Brewster Public Library

Debra Kamecke, Director, Cairo Public Library

Caroline Ford, Director, Catskill Public Library

Thea Schoep, Director, Claverack Free Library

Carol Bancroft, Director, Clinton Community Library

Johanna Reinhardt, Director, Julia L. Butterfield Memorial Library (Cold Spring)

Catherine Benson, Director, Heermance Memorial Library (Coxsackie)

Donna Perolli, Director, Dover Plains Library

Gloria Goverman, Director, East Fishkill Community Library

Brooke Dittmar, Director, Town of Esopus Library

Dede Farabaugh, Director, Desmond-Fish Library (Garrison)

Lynn Place, Director, Germantown Library

Julie Kelsall-Dempsey, Director, Highland Public Library

Tamara Gaskell, Director, Roeliff Jansen Community Library (Hillsdale, Ancram, Copake)

Emily Chameides, Director, Hudson Area Association Library

Kristen Campbell, Director, Hurley Library

Jesse Chance, Director, Hyde Park Public Library District

Carol Donick, Director, Kent Public Library

Matthew Pavolff, Director, Kinderhook Memorial Library

Margie Menard, Director Kingston Library

Mary De Bellis, Director LaGrange Association Library



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Wendy Tremper Wollerton, Director, Livingston Free Library

Michele Capozzella, Director, Mahopac Library

Christina Jennerich, Director, Marlboro Free Library

Courtney Tsahalís, Director, Millbrook Library

Lois Skelly, Director, Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library (Milton)

Michelle Hoffman, Director, New Lebanon Library

Vicki Wills, Director, North Chatham Free Library

Rhiannon Leo-Jameson, Director, NorthEast-Millerton Library

Chrissy Lawlor, Director, Olive Free Library

Stephanie Harrison, Director, Patterson Library

Tobi Farley, Director, Philmont Public Library

Elizabeth Potter, Director, Phoenicia Library

Gisela Vella, Director, Morton Memorial Library (Pine Hill)

Alexis Tackett, Director, Pine Plains Free Library

Darren Lanspery, Director, Plattekill Library

Daniela Pulice, Director, Pleasant Valley Free Library

Katherine Reilly, Director, Putnam Valley Library

Jaclyn Savolainen, Director, Starr Library (Rhinebeck)

Sandy Bartlett, Director, Morton Memorial Library & Community House (Rhinecliff)

Katie Scott-Childress, Director, Rosendale Public Library

Lorraine Rothman, Director, Staatsburg Library District

Maureen Garcia, Director, Mountain Top Library (Tannersville)

Michele DelPriore, Director, Tivoli Free Library

Mary Collins, Director, Town of Ulster Public Library

Elizabeth Powhida, Director, Valatie Free Library

Fran Harrison, Director Grinnell Public Library District (Wappingers Falls)

Ivy Gocker, Director, Woodstock Public Library District