

April 24, 2021

Members of the Oregon Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Arlene Weible and I am a librarian who lives in Salem, Oregon. I am also the Vice-President of the Oregon Library Association. I would like to provide supporting testimony for the following issues before the committee:

Please support [HB 5017](#), which provides funding for the State Library and specifically for the Ready to Read grant program. I would like to ask for an additional investment by the legislature in this important program. A small increase of only \$129,000 could double the amount of grant funding small communities like Jefferson, Mt. Angel, Sheridan, and Willamina would receive and help them grow summer reading activities for kids. Library programs will provide some of the extra support kids need to help them recover from learning loss after the disruptions of the pandemic. This timely investment will also allow Ready to Read grants to have a more significant impact on early literacy outcomes for Oregon's smallest and most rural libraries.

I also ask that you support [HB 5012](#), which funds the Judicial Department and specifically the pass-through funding for county law libraries. These law libraries provide no cost essential service to Oregonians in need of legal information and services. Staff at these libraries help answer questions about custody enforcement, landlord evictions, unemployment benefits, and many other legal issues.

I specifically ask that you restore the \$900,000 that was cut in 2020 in anticipation of reduced revenue levels. Now that revenue projections are more positive, it is imperative that these libraries receive funding to make them whole again so they can support Oregonians who need legal resources to help them recover from the pandemic.

Finally, I would ask the committee to work with the Governor to [allocate \\$130 million from the State's American Recovery Plan Act \(ARPA\) funding for Oregon's special districts](#). Currently there are 25 special library districts that service 760,000 Oregonians and they are particularly essential for supporting disadvantaged rural communities.

These districts meet essential needs of residents by providing access to the Internet and supporting technology. They also provide services that support learning of digital skills as well as early literacy and online learning for children.

ARPA provides states with authority to transfer Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery monies specifically to special districts, to assure the important services they provide

continue during the disruptions caused by the pandemic. In many rural areas, more residents receive services from special districts than from cities or counties, so it is only fair that they also receive some of the economic relief provided by this funding.

Thank you for your consideration of libraries as you work through the difficult budgeting tasks ahead.

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