

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

We write to urge you to support the education, workforce, and economic development needs of Americans by providing funding at the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 level for our nation's library programs – the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program – in the FY 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

Libraries serve a unique and important role in providing free access to all types of information and computing services. The demand for such services has grown in concert with the need to apply online for many jobs and government services and as Americans have been increasingly unable to afford broadband in their homes. Indeed, throughout the economic downturn, patrons have been turning to their local library for assistance and access to essential information on a wide range of topics.

Robust federal support for the state formula program and competitive grants under LSTA is more essential than ever as it will expand the job search and skill building services that are in great demand; ensure access to vital online information and specialized business tools and resources; and retain librarians while recruiting new entrants to this important field.

Improving Literacy Through School Libraries

Since 1965, more than 60 education and library studies have produced clear evidence that school libraries staffed by qualified librarians have a positive impact on student academic achievement. Knowing how to find and use information are essential skills for college and careers. A good school library, staffed by a trained school librarian, is where students develop and hone these skills.

The Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program, authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is the government's sole initiative specifically aimed at upgrading school libraries. This effective competitive grant program, aimed at our nation's neediest school districts, seeks to improve literacy and career and college readiness skills by providing schools with up-to-date library materials and technology, enhancing the professional development of school librarians, and expanding access to school libraries.

In sum, we urge you to provide robust funding for LSTA and the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in order to ensure that Americans of all ages have access to information and can gain needed skills.

We recognize the difficult constraints you face and thank you for your continued support.