



SUFFOLK COUNTY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Nick LaLota
515 Hauppauge Rd
Suite 3B
Hauppauge, NY 11788

Dear Representative LaLota,

On behalf of The Suffolk County Library Association, a group that represents Suffolk County's library workers of which serve nearly a million residents who utilize their local libraries, I am reaching out to express deep concern about proposed Federal budget cuts that would have a far-reaching and harmful impact on the communities we serve.

In 2024, Suffolk County residents visited their public libraries more than 6.6 million times, and over 1.5 million attended library programs. Our libraries continue to be essential educational institutions and centers of community life by providing trusted spaces where people turn for help navigating complex systems, accessing accurate information, and building better futures. Therefore, it stands to reason that this issue goes well beyond traditional library aid. It speaks to the foundational role federal investment plays in ensuring Suffolk County residents have equitable access to critical services including but not limited to: broadband, literacy programs, workforce development, and essential community support.

At a time when Long Islanders are already contributing more to the federal government than they receive, especially following the elimination of the SALT deduction, it is simply unreasonable to expect our communities to shoulder the burden of federal cuts. Nowhere is this more evident than in the looming threat to the E-Rate program and IMLS funding.

The E-Rate program, funded through the Universal Service Fund, delivers nearly \$100 million statewide, \$35 million of that to Long Island to ensure public schools and libraries can provide high-speed internet to the public. **We urge you to work to ensure the continuation of the E-Rate program because limiting or destabilizing this funding would either force local governments to raise property taxes significantly or restrict public access to broadband entirely. In both cases, our patrons and your voters lose.**

Broadband access is not just about education or economics, it is a matter of public health and safety. Our schools, libraries, and communities rely on reliable internet connections to coordinate with local governments, organize food drives, promote medical services, and communicate with emergency services, and law enforcement. **We urge you to advocate for permanent, reliable funding for E-Rate so our communities remain connected and prepared.**

We all urge you to advance federal funding to strengthen and expand library services. The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), provides New York with approximately \$8 million in annual federal funding. This supports everything from statewide programs and construction grants to local library development and system services. In the context of the federal budget, this number may appear small; the impact it has at the local level is substantial. The removal or reduction of this support would raise operational costs, limit innovation, and reduce our capacity to serve vulnerable populations. While \$8 million may seem like a rounding error on the federal level, we can assure you it is not a rounding error for New York's libraries. It is a vital piece of the infrastructure that allows us to deliver the world-class library services your constituents rely on every day.

More broadly, we urge you to view these funding issues not in isolation but as part of a much larger concern. As funding cuts continue, programs like Medicaid, school aid, and library services could be at risk. Once these essential areas are removed, there may be little left to absorb the cuts. No matter how you examine it, the result is devastating consequences for communities across Suffolk County.

As the Federal government cuts back on the resources it makes available to residents/taxpayers even more people will be turning to their community libraries for support with preparing taxes, starting a new business, finding assistance in times of emergency, getting accurate health information, connecting to The Social Security Administration, and gaining access to many other critically important programs and services. **Therefore, we strongly encourage you to speak with House leadership and continue advocating for stable, long-term federal support for broadband access, library services, and essential community programs.**

Libraries are committed partners in lifelong learning, economic development, digital equity, and civic engagement. We stand ready to continue supporting our patrons, many who voted for you, but we need the federal government to stand with us.

We remind you that The Suffolk County Library Association is a growing organization with more than 400 members. Additionally, library workers and library supporters are incredibly active members of our communities and **we vote**.

Thank you for your understanding, continued service and your attention to the concerns of the libraries, residents, and voters of Suffolk County, NY.

On behalf of the Suffolk County Library Association Board,

Anthony Giansante
President of the Suffolk County Library Association