



Kirtland PUBLIC LIBRARY

Hello. My name is Missy Littell and I am the Director of the Kirtland Public Library. I have had the great fortune to work in public libraries for the past 27 years. Two weeks into my current job as Director, I was working at the Reference desk when a woman came in who had suddenly found herself to be a single mother. She had three children and needed to find a job right away. She hadn't written a resume in years and asked for help creating one, printing out copies and searching for jobs in the area. We were able to give her everything she needed that day.

This story is a common one in libraries. Every day, patrons walk through our doors needing (sometimes desperate for) resources, needing a person to guide them through a process with which they are unfamiliar or rusty, or for which they don't have the equipment—a computer, wifi, printer, copy machine and databases.

Last year, our library (and keep in mind, we're a small library) had over 41,000 visitors to our location. We held 383 programs and nearly 10,000 attended those programs. The demand for public library services at the local level is growing, usage is increasing, and the rising cost of inflation can no longer be absorbed or ignored. The number of people visiting our library each year continues to increase. We're a place you can come to when you need a COVID test or when your printer breaks down. Last August, a large storm blew through the area and many residents lost power for a week. Our library was a safe, temperature-controlled space where residents could plug in their devices, use our wifi and work remotely. It was a very busy week for our library, but we were able to meet real needs in our community.

There are seniors on fixed incomes who visit our library every day. They are there for books, information, and for a friendly conversation. They can count on us to provide all of that. Laketrans' Seniors on the Go program provides free transportation to a variety of places, one of which is libraries. That is because libraries are recognized as safe, friendly places where needs are met. One of these senior patrons recently came to me because her phone wasn't working. She'd gotten water inside the screen and didn't know how to remove it. I showed her how to take it apart, dry it, and put it back together. She tells everyone who listens about how we fixed her phone.

Another senior shared with me that he has no access to a computer or wifi without the library. He simply can't afford them. He said to me a few weeks ago "Who do I need to



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contact to keep library funding strong? I would have no access to a computer or internet without the library. That is why I come here every week. Please tell them what this place means to me.”

We provide meeting rooms for a variety of groups throughout the year. One such group, called Play2Learn, meets weekly and provides resources for families and children with special needs. Without the library, they would not have a free space to meet and help these children develop the skills they need to thrive. We help children of all abilities become stronger readers, which in turn makes them stronger learners. Our Summer Reading program helps students prevent the summer slide in learning, and hundreds of people utilize this program each year.

The needs are real, and libraries meet those community needs every day. I am asking you to fund the PLF at the level originally proposed in the Executive Budget: \$531.7 million in FY26 and \$549.1 million in FY27. Please eliminate the \$10.2 million deduction from the PLF for multiple state agencies. These entities should be funded directly from the GRF.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Missy Littell, Director