

July 2, 2020

The Honorable Governor Ron DeSantis
Office of the Governor
State of Florida, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis,

I am a graduate student in the School of Information at the University of South Florida as well as a student member of the Florida Library Association, and am writing to express my displeasure in your veto of state-funded library programs from the 2020-2021 budget. I know that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused great economic upheaval for the state, and programs had to be cut, but I wish these library programs were not amongst those on the chopping block.

Specifically, two much-needed public programs' funding was eradicated or cut. The first, the *Complete Florida Plus Program*, provides online learning resources and support services to over 1.3 million Floridians. It works in coordination with the Florida College and State University System to streamline online services across institutions in both a cost-effective and operationally-effective manner. Further, this Program administers the Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative, which manages Florida's library information portal and management tools across the state's postsecondary institutions as well as other consolidated resources used by academic colleges and universities.

Your veto of appropriation 161A has eliminated \$29.4 million in funding, which eradicates this Program. I would think in times such as these when the education world is turning to online learning at an unprecedented rate, funding for resources and supports facilitating online education would be bolstered, not cut. Luckily, an emergency rescue of the Complete Florida Plus Program is underway to maintain essential portions of the funding under a new name and oversight. Online education services should remain a financial priority of the state, however, and I hope Florida will resume funding this reconfigured program next year in its 2021-2022 budget.

The other program affected by your veto is a \$2 million cut to Florida's Multitype Library Cooperative, which consists of five cooperatives across the state that provide ongoing programs and services to libraries. Since I live in Pinellas County, one of the five – the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC) – is supremely important to me and the library community. The TBLC collaborates and empowers 120 academic, public, and school libraries in Central Florida, and continuously works towards improving library services in my community through trainings and workshops, interlibrary loans, and the statewide virtual "Ask a Librarian" program.

The Pinellas Public Library Cooperative and my local library, the Seminole Community Library, are members and receive these benefits from TBLC. This directly affects me as a frequent

patron and soon-to-be librarian because I need to be able to use library community resources and attend trainings in order to better know my job and serve the public. When millions are cut from a program, the public suffers.

Libraries are on the front lines as emergency responders in our communities. My library was one of the last government buildings to close and one of the first to open when everything was shut down this spring. Staff continue to help adults navigate unemployment and apply for jobs, assist students of all ages in online learning, and do outreach to the community via social media for children's summer reading programming. Libraries are doing amazingly active work toward economic recovery in Pinellas, and should have fully funded programs and systems to excel. I hope both you and the Legislature vote to preserve funding these vital library programs next term, and I look forward to following your process.

Sincerely,

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