

**Testimony before the Joint Subcommittee on General Government
For The State Library of Oregon Budget HB 5017
Ann Malkin, State Library Board Chair
February 10, 2021**

Co-Chair Smith, Co-Chair Golden, and members of the subcommittee, my name is Ann Malkin. I am the current chair of the State Library Board. I live in Bend, where I also serve on the elected Deschutes Public Library District Board. I am a second-generation native Oregonian and have actively supported public libraries as a volunteer for more than 25 years. I am retired as Director of Communications for Bend Research, a pharmaceutical research and development laboratory that is a cornerstone of the tech community in Central Oregon.

I am here to testify on House Bill 5017, addressing the State Library of Oregon budget for the next biennium. I come before you representing the nine-member State Library Board, who were appointed by the governor and represent a broad range of stakeholders. We have board members from a variety of state agencies, including the Department of Education and Commission for the Blind; citizens; and library professionals from academic, private-sector, and public libraries. We hail from all parts of the state, from tiny Summerville in Union County (population 135) to Portland, Independence, and Central Oregon. I'm proud to serve with these committed, knowledgeable Oregonians whose wide range of expertise, drawing from public and private sectors, ensures that we provide excellent oversight over the budget and activities of the State Library of Oregon.

As for all of Oregon, this has been a challenging time for the State Library, but one that has highlighted the resilience and creativity of the agency's staff and the importance of the services we provide. Throughout this time, we have:

- Provided crucial support to libraries across the state, giving them the information they need to safely serve their patrons in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating wildfires.
- Provided vital training, research support, and document delivery to state agency employees and the Legislature as we've moved into remote working and meeting scenarios.
- Transformed our service to Oregonians with print disabilities, improving efficiency, decreasing staff time, and expanding access to a much wider variety of materials.
- Provided vital grants that made summer reading and early literacy programs possible in communities of all sizes throughout the state, reaching more than 250,000 children.
- Continued our work to increase efficiency, reduce waste, and find innovative ways to partner with other state agencies and groups.

In addition to these direct benefits to the external stakeholders we serve, we have made substantive progress within our agency since we last came before you. We have:

- Concluded a successful recruitment process that led to the appointment of an outstanding ***new State Librarian***, Jennifer Patterson, who has extensive professional experience and management skills.
- Adopted a new ***strategic plan*** and developed a clear roadmap for achieving the goals we have set.
- Worked jointly with the Governor's office to develop and implement a ***performance review*** process for the State Librarian position, prompted by changes to the appointment process of the State Librarian and State Library Board's role with the adoption of House Bill 3523 in 2015.
- Modernized and improved the ***management structure*** of the State Library, working within existing staffing levels to increase efficiency and improve oversight.

Even in these challenging times, the quick response of the State Library staff and the internal and external improvements have ensured superlative service to a wide array of stakeholder groups. This challenge is substantial, since the State Library is charged with serving many diverse groups. We:

- Provide essential information and research support to state agencies and state legislators and their staffs;
- Ensure quality and reduces waste through its oversight, mandated by the Legislature, of reference databases and electronic resources purchased by state agencies.
- Provide a lifeline of books and connection to more than 5,000 Oregonians with print disabilities, which includes visual, physical, and reading impairments, throughout the state through the Talking Books and Braille Library.
- Award and administer crucial state and federal grants that spur innovation and enhance services for all sizes of libraries.
- Support more than 1,700 public, academic, special, and tribal libraries.
- Provide assistance for citizens of our state who are working to reopen closed libraries.

The past biennium has been marked by significant accomplishments and innovation. A few highlights include the following. The State Library

- Provided vital information and **support to libraries** throughout the state during the COVID-19 pandemic and wildfire emergencies, interpreting state guidance and rules and providing information on national best practices for libraries. In addition to safety recommendations, the State Library has facilitated information sharing among libraries on new service models, reopening strategies, and safety practices.
- Administered \$381,108 in **CARES Act funding**, addressing crucial service gaps throughout the state. Funds were targeted to ensure digital inclusion and technical support for Oregon's neediest citizens and students. Some 43 public, community college, and tribal libraries received funds to be used for mobile hotspots, equipment, and materials for outreach and remote services. In addition, the State Library administered 101 **COVID-19 mini grants** to 101 different school, public, academic, and tribal libraries.
- Provided **innovative training** to state employees on new and existing online resources, which are especially valuable as employees work remotely.
- Provided crucial, up-to-date information to nearly 2,000 state employees daily through its popular eClips service, which compiles state government news from media sources throughout the state.
- Expanded its efforts to provide state agencies with **embedded librarians** who tailor reference services and training to meet those agencies' specific needs. These librarians act as "information partners," proactively suggesting resources and participating in research projects and legislative concept creation.
- Using federal dollars, made 24 **databases available to all Oregonians**, including the Learning Express Library, which provides free job skills training, tutorials, and tests in a variety of fields.
- Hosted **Answerland**, a 24/7 virtual reference service that includes service in English and Spanish for all Oregonians.
- Leveraged **federal, state, and local funding** to provide maximum benefits to Oregon libraries, including more than \$2.4 million last year in allocations from the federal Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA). The State Library awarded \$394,924 in LSTA competitive grants to local libraries in 2020 and has streamlined administration of these grants, which drive innovation in libraries of all sizes throughout Oregon.
- Awarded grants in 2020 to all 134 eligible public libraries in the state for the Ready to Read grant program. Every \$1 in grant funding last year was leveraged by an average of \$2.98 in community support. The State Library thanks the Legislature for continuing to fund this essential program, which touches every child in the state.

- Developed and deepened dozens of ***formal and informal partnerships*** inside and outside state government. In addition to reducing potential duplication of services, these efforts have led to regional collaborations and discussion of collaborative disaster preparedness and response.

The board supports the State Library leadership and staff in the innovative organizational development and achievements of the past biennium and in forging a cooperative environment among staff and agency partners. The proposed budget before you is designed to continue this important work. We look forward to continuing to meet the needs and expectations of the Legislature and all Oregonians for increased efficiency through technology and partnerships. Thank you for your kind attention.

Respectfully submitted,

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