

Date,

The Honorable Nicholas J. LaLota
Washington District Office
122 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative LaLota,

I am writing to you as a patron and taxpayer of one of Suffolk County's fifty-six public library districts and the over 5,000 Mattituck / Laurel community residents who utilize the services of their hometown library. I would like to share with you some significant concerns that I have regarding the Federal budget and some items related to the Federal budget that are important to the Mattituck / Laurel community and all Suffolk County library patrons and taxpayers.

Last year Suffolk residents visited their public libraries more than 6,650,000 times and over 1,500,000 Suffolk residents attended a program at their local library. Libraries continue to thrive as community centers and as social support organizations connecting people to a wide variety of resources that meet many needs. 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.

I am asking for the Federal government to remain front and center with ensuring local residents have access to universal and affordable broadband services. The E-Rate program, funded through the Universal Service Fund, is in need of stable and permanent Federal funding. This program brings in nearly \$100M to New York's libraries and schools to ensure that students, seniors, entrepreneurs, job seekers, and all New Yorkers have access to high-speed broadband through their public libraries and schools. On Long Island alone the funding figure is close to \$35M. Without this funding Long Island's libraries and schools would have two choices: not offer internet access to local residents or require local property taxes to increase by an additional \$35M. At a time when the Federal government has eliminated the SALT deductions and Long Islanders pay significantly more into the Federal budget than they receive back in services, neither option is tenable.

E-Rate is more than just an education and economic development issue... it is also a critical public safety issue as our libraries and schools rely on these internet connections to contact local government, fire districts, and law enforcement at times of crises. I call on you to speak to leadership in the House and demand that universal and affordable broadband continue to be made available through the Federal E-Rate program.

I also call on Congress to advance Federal funding to strengthen and expand library services. The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the largest source of Federal funding for library services in the United States. State library agencies, like New York, receive LSTA funding to support statewide initiatives and services, all to the benefit of local libraries and the communities they serve. The approximately \$8M that New York receives in LSTA funding allows local libraries and systems to access state aid, construction grants, and a wide array of support services which assist and promote library services throughout New York.

I ask you to speak to leadership in the House and demand that LSTA and IMLS funding remains stable in the new budget so that your constituents continue to have access to all of the world class library services of which they are accustomed and need.

Libraries are an important part of New York's education ecosystem and are centers for lifelong learning. Libraries coordinate programs and offer resources to increase and strengthen the reading skills of children and adults. Reading is the gateway to success in education, work and life; it strengthens problem solving, language and communication skills and enables adults to decode critical health, financial, and other information. Libraries stand ready to support their communities and assist their patrons with their education, workforce development, and employment needs while connecting them to cultural programs and materials.

Thank you for your attention and consideration on these important matters.

Sincerely,

Name

Address