

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 637

Expressing support for the staff of public, school, academic, and special libraries in the United States and the essential services those libraries provide to communities, recognizing the need for funding commensurate with the broad scope of social service and community supports provided by libraries, preserving the right of all citizens of the United States to freely access information and resources in their communities, supporting a strong union voice for library workers, and defending the civil rights of library staff.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 11 (legislative day, APRIL 10), 2024

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. REED, Ms. BUTLER, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. KING, and Mr. PADILLA) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the staff of public, school, academic, and special libraries in the United States and the essential services those libraries provide to communities, recognizing the need for funding commensurate with the broad scope of social service and community supports provided by libraries, preserving the right of all citizens of the United States to freely access information and resources in their communities, supporting a strong union voice for library workers, and defending the civil rights of library staff.

Whereas library staff are cornerstones of their communities in the United States, providing visitors with access to books and media, delivering high-quality programming to visitors of all ages, ensuring equitable internet access for all, and linking people to crucial information about accessing social services;

Whereas libraries are an economic powerhouse in their communities, providing resources to small business owners, job seekers, and individuals learning new skills;

Whereas, in recent years, library staff have been called on to address the fallout from difficult public crises in the United States, taking on roles that exceed the traditional role of providing a space for, and access to, educational and cultural enrichment;

Whereas library staff provide lifesaving care to members of their communities who are suffering the effects of the ongoing and tragic opioid epidemic in the United States, including being called on to administer medication to treat overdoses;

Whereas libraries are a safe haven for individuals and families who are unhoused, and library workers provide the supportive community environment and resources needed by unhoused individuals and families;

Whereas libraries are often the only source of internet for underserved communities;

Whereas library staff maintained public access to essential library services and were relied on to distribute personal protective equipment and provide testing to the public during the worst days of the COVID-19 pandemic;

Whereas libraries have met an expanded and intensified demand for community, public health, and safety net serv-

ices, often while contending with severe funding cuts, creating unsustainable and frequently unsafe working conditions for library staff;

Whereas the health and survival of democracy in the United States requires that everyone be able to exercise rights to information and services, and it is especially important for young people to have the opportunity to learn, encounter, and debate all manner of ideas, including controversial ones;

Whereas students have been shown to spend more time reading and exhibit higher reading scores when given access to diverse titles, and library staff play a crucial role in curating diverse book offerings for young readers;

Whereas a fundamental responsibility of the job of library staff is making decisions about the books and media in their collections and assisting visitors in accessing those materials without fear of censorship or reprisal for fulfilling the role of providing information and resources to the public;

Whereas, from 2023 to 2024, there were deplorable incidents throughout the United States that were orchestrated to intimidate library staff and prevent them from fulfilling their central work responsibility to provide the public with free and unfettered access to information;

Whereas library staff across the United States are mobilizing for a collective union voice in their workplaces to elevate their profession, to ensure safe and adequately resourced spaces that meet the needs of the communities they serve, and to protect the essential role of libraries in the democracy of the United States; and

Whereas the week of April 7 through April 13, 2024, would be an appropriate time to celebrate “National Library Week”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) commends the work of library staff in the
3 United States;

4 (2) supports the goals and ideals of National
5 Library Week;

6 (3) recognizes that libraries and library staff
7 provide critical infrastructure for the United States
8 and are essential to the future of the United States;

9 (4) supports the prioritization of full funding of
10 library services at the Federal, State, and local levels
11 to ensure the continuation and improvement of li-
12 brary services;

13 (5) reaffirms—

14 (A) the fundamental right of the people of
15 the United States to access information, which
16 is made real through the efforts of library staff;

17 (B) the fundamental right of library work-
18 ers to organize and collectively bargain at work
19 and to have a protected voice in their work-
20 place; and

21 (C) the civil rights of library workers to ex-
22 ercise their responsibilities to the public without
23 threats or intimidation; and

1 (6) recognizes the right of library staff—

2 (A) to speak out on matters of public con-
3 cern;

4 (B) to address themselves to elected offi-
5 cials and to the administration of the entities
6 that employ library staff; and

7 (C) to inform the people of the United
8 States about their right to free and unfettered
9 access to information, and about threats to that
10 access.

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