



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

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April 30, 2002

STATE 'S LIBRARIES BUSIER THAN EVER

Dear Editor:

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I am writing to express my deep concern regarding recently proposed cuts in state funding for libraries.

Four million Massachusetts residents regularly use our libraries, and in these challenging times, libraries are being more heavily used than ever. Patrons borrowed more than 47 million books and other library materials from our public libraries last year, a million more than the previous year. They visited them 23.5 million times—three quarters of a million times more than the previous year—and the use of online and interlibrary services is increasing even more dramatically.

These huge increases in patron use are partly due to the growing importance of libraries in an information age, and partly due to the opening of more than 150 new and renovated library buildings during the last decade.

But there is another reason for this increased usage: in difficult economic times, people turn to libraries. People on reduced incomes or experiencing financial difficulties turn to libraries as a source of reading, viewing and listening materials they can no longer afford to purchase. People who have lost work turn to libraries to research employment opportunities and to support training and education as career plans change. Often, the library simply serves as a source of community amid the stress of difficult times.

Throughout the current state budget crisis, there has been widespread agreement that education, the key to our future prosperity and security, must continue to be a top funding priority. However, over the last two years, library funding has been cut repeatedly, and the current proposal would reduce library funding for some programs by 50 percent.

Proposed reductions of 50 percent in state funding for library technology, library materials and library hours will hurt millions of residents when they need libraries most. It is time that our legislative leaders recognize that libraries are the “other half” of education in Massachusetts. No one would propose cutting state funding for education by 50 percent!

In this difficult budget year, it is more important than ever that we keep our libraries open. People are using them more than ever and people need them more than ever.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward L. Bertorelli".

Edward Bertorelli
Chairman