



THE LONG BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION

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August 23, 2022

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Long Beach City Council
Long Beach City Hall
411 W. Ocean Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: August 23, 2022 City Council Special Meeting–Budget Hearing–Agenda Item 1

Dear Honorable Members of the City Council:

The Long Beach Public Library Foundation Board of Directors and staff appreciate your support of the City's 12 public libraries.

The City's FY23 proposed budget includes the first significant increases to the Library's structural budget in more than a decade. However, these proposed increases do not allow the Library to open its doors more hours to provide greater access to books, WiFi and computers, adaptive technology for those with disabilities, homework help, job search support, and more. According to a March 2022 report from the Long Beach Unified School District, 61 percent of elementary and 66 percent of middle school students in Long Beach read below grade level during the first in-person school year since the pandemic began. **Now more than ever, Long Beach families need increased access to the crucial educational resources the Library has to offer.**

Many City surveys and reports, including the **Racial Equity & Reconciliation Initiative Report, Youth & Emerging Adults Strategic Plan, Early Childhood Education Strategic Plan, Digital Inclusion Roadmap, and City Auditor's Report on Library Services**, all call for more library resources and greater access to the 12 public libraries to accomplish the City's goal of creating a more equitable future.

To make crucial educational resources more accessible for the many in Long Beach who depend on the 12 public libraries, we ask that the City Council make the following decisions when adopting Long Beach's FY23 budget:

Increase the Library's structural budget for materials by at least \$800,000: You have an opportunity this year to increase the Library's materials budget for the first time in more than a decade. Currently, the proposed budget includes a \$400,000 increase to the structural budget for materials and an additional \$400,000 in one-time funding for materials. We ask you to make the proposed \$400,000 in one-time funding a part of the Library's structural budget – for a total of \$800,000 in additional structural funds for materials in FY23. With this significant amount of new structural funds, the Library will be able to work towards catching up to the amount that peer library systems spend on materials and can continue to plan essential updates to its collection. This is especially important as the Library looks to increase its materials in Spanish, Khmer, Tagalog, and other languages spoken in Long Beach homes.

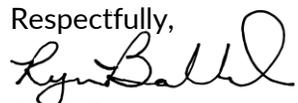
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Increase the Library’s structural budget for more open hours so that the 12 public libraries may open to the public at least 48 hours per week: The FY23 proposed budget does not include any funding for additional open hours at our public libraries when the community needs greater access. The 12 Long Beach public libraries are open an average of 34.3 hours per week. Last year, the City Auditor noted that Long Beach is well behind peer library systems which average 48 to 61 open hours per week. Cities with a similar population size to Long Beach, like Oakland, Miami, and New Orleans, have more public libraries open significantly more hours than Long Beach to promote equity. Long Beach residents deserve greater access to their libraries.

Approve the recommendation to eliminate fines for overdue books and materials: We applaud the City Manager’s recommendation in the FY23 proposed budget to eliminate overdue fines so that Long Beach may join the Los Angeles Public Library and Los Angeles County Library systems in permanently removing this barrier to equity and we ask that you approve this change. Last year, the City Auditor recommended permanently eliminating overdue fines because they financially burden low-income families, are unlikely to increase the likelihood that library materials will be returned on time, and require library staff to dedicate time to monitoring and collecting fines. This staff time could be re-allocated to patron services for greater community benefit.

Now more than ever, residents deserve more significant investments in free educational resources. We have included a chart below that shows how Long Beach Public Library compares to other California cities which make more significant investments in their library system to promote equity. We hope you will choose to follow this example in recognition of the important role libraries play in our community. Thank you for your consideration as you lead Long Beach.

Respectfully,

 Ryan Ballard
 Board President
 LBPL Foundation


 Sharon L. Weissman
 Board VP of Public Affairs
 LBPL Foundation


 Veronica Garcia Dávalos
 Executive Director/CEO
 LBPL Foundation

HOW DOES THE LONG BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY COMPARE TO OTHER SYSTEMS

LIBRARY SYSTEM	CITY POP. (2020)	# OF LIBRARIES	# OF LIBRARIES OPEN 7 DAYS/ WEEK	AVERAGE OPEN HOURS/ WEEK AT A LIBRARY IN THIS SYSTEM	MATERIALS BUDGET EXPENDITURE/ RESIDENT (FY20)	TOTAL BUDGET (FY22)
Long Beach Public Library	462,081	12	Zero – ours are open 5 days/week	34.3 hours/week	\$1.43	\$16,632,492
Oakland Public Library	422,575	18	Three (14 libraries open 6 days/week)	49.1 hours/week	\$4.05	\$45,748,038
Pasadena Public Library	142,017	9 currently open – Central Library closed for renovation	One (7 libraries open 6 days/week)	48 hours/week	\$7.48	\$21,084,029
San Francisco Public Library	874,784	28	22	49.1 hours/week	\$16.51	\$171,192,006