

California State Senate

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SENATOR LENA A. GONZALEZ

THIRTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT

SENATE MAJORITY WHIP
CHAIR, SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

September 6, 2022

Mayor Robert Garcia and the Long Beach City Council
411 W. Ocean Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Request to increase the Library's FY23 structural budget for materials and open hours

Dear Mayor Garcia and Members of the Long Beach City Council,

As the State Senator representing California's 33rd District, I urge you to increase the Long Beach Public Library's FY23 structural budget to provide additional materials to our constituents and expand the libraries' hours of operation. 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 City's 12 public libraries to expand their hours of operation to provide greater access to crucial educational resources. 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 educational resources offered by the Long Beach Public Library system.

To ensure equitable access to educational resources for Long Beach families who depend on the 12 public libraries, I urge the City Council to increase the Library's structural budget. The City's proposed FY23 budget includes a \$400,000 structural increase for materials and an additional \$400,000 in one-time funding for materials. I urge your support to make the proposed \$400,000 in one-time funding for materials a part of the Library's structural budget—for a total of \$800,000 in additional structural funds for materials. This increase will enable the Library to continue to plan essential updates to its collection and resources offered.

In addition, I urge the City Council to increase the Library's structural budget to expand the libraries' hours of operation. 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 for significantly more hours than Long Beach in their effort to promote equity. Long Beach residents deserve greater access to their libraries.

CAPITOL OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 2068
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4033
FAX (916) 651-4933

LONG BEACH DISTRICT OFFICE
3939 ATLANTIC AVE., SUITE 107
LONG BEACH, CA 90807
TEL (562) 256-7921
FAX (562) 256-9991

HUNTINGTON PARK DISTRICT OFFICE
3355 E. GAGE AVENUE
HUNTINGTON PARK, CA 90255
TEL (323) 277-4560
FAX (323) 277-4528

Lastly, I ask that you approve the City Manager's recommendation 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. Overdue fines are a financial burden to low-income families. Moreover, they are unlikely to increase the likelihood that library materials will be returned on time, and the revenue collected is negligible.

For these reasons, I respectfully request you make these significant investments for the Long Beach community. If you have any questions regarding my support, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (562) 256-7921.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lena Gonzalez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Lena Gonzalez
Senator, District 33