



**TESTIMONY OF
OF PATRICIA A. TUMULTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
In Support of A222
Before the Assembly State and Local Government Committee**

April 4, 2016

Good afternoon. On behalf of the members of the New Jersey Library Association and the NJ Library Trustee Association, I want to thank the sponsors for this legislation and to give our whole hearted support of its passage.

It has been over fifteen years since the passage of the last Public Library Construction Bond Act. That Act was extremely successful with 68 communities constructing or renovating library facilities. That funding transformed library service for many communities with the addition of new computer facilities, upgraded teen centers and large community meeting rooms. Gone are the days of libraries as mere warehouses of books. Today's libraries are modern community centers. Last year there were over 44 million visitors to our public libraries.

We find the need today is greater than ever. The New Jersey Library Association conducted a Capital Improvement Survey in late 2014 to assess construction needs. We found many deficiencies.

- 45% responded their current facilities were not ADA compliant (needed ramps, elevators and restroom upgrades.)
- 60% responded they needed additional square footage
- 49% responded they needed electrical upgrades
- 75% responded they need interior painting, re-carpeting or new furnishing.
- 64% responded they needed additional service points such a self-service kiosks.

Unfortunately, with the difficulties of local budgets few libraries receive regular capital appropriations. This bill is desperately needed by many communities. Passage of this bill will be an investment in the future of many communities in New Jersey.

We also believe this bill will provide a tremendous economic impact for our state. The projects completed with the first 45 million bond act resulted in over \$200 million of construction projects. We strongly believe that this legislation will have the same tremendous impact on economic growth. This will create jobs for many local companies throughout New Jersey.

We thank you for considering this legislation. Libraries build communities and this funding will help transform many of our libraries into vibrant community education centers for residents of all ages.