



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

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SEAN M. RYAN January 28, 2022

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SENATOR SEAN RYAN JOINS LOCAL LIBRARY ADVOCATES TO HIGHLIGHT NEEDS FOR BUDGET SEASON

Senator Ryan Touts Importance of Restoring Library Construction Aid Funding and Distributing Digital Inclusion Grants

BUFFALO – Today, January 28, 2022, New York State Senator Sean Ryan joined officials from the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library at the Crane Branch Library to highlight the importance of distributing digital inclusion grants funded in last year’s budget and restoring library construction funding slated to be cut in this year’s budget. The Crane Branch is currently undergoing a major, multi-phase construction project with funding supported by state library construction aid.

Senator Ryan led the effort to secure a \$20 million increase in library construction aid in last year’s state budget. The final FY 2021-2022 budget included \$34 million in construction aid and nearly \$130 million in total aid to public libraries across New York State. The executive budget proposal for FY 2021-2022 features cuts to the library construction aid allocation, returning it to \$14 million in FY 2022-2023. Following the announcement of the proposal, Senator Ryan and Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre [pledged to fight to restore the proposed cuts to library construction funding](#).

Library construction aid supports the maintenance, renovation, and expansion of existing facilities, and new construction of public libraries throughout the state, with a focus on digital equity needs for various communities.

As legislators begin work to finalize the FY 2022-2023 budget, the \$15 million in funds from the Statewide Digital Inclusion Grant Program established as part of last year’s state budget have not yet been distributed. Instead, the funding for the program has been re-appropriated in this year’s executive budget proposal. As Chair of the Senate Libraries Committee, Senator Ryan recently joined Assemblymember Jean-Pierre, Chair of the Assembly Libraries Committee, and the ranking members of their respective committees to send [a letter to Robert F. Mujica, Director of the Budget for New York State requesting that the program’s funding be disbursed in a timely manner](#).

The Statewide Digital Inclusion Grant Program was established in recognition of the need for affordable, reliable high-speed internet. It was designed to help local organizations throughout New York address disparities in access to essential digital technology in their communities by providing affordable access to home broadband devices, tech support, and training courses for schools, libraries, and not-for-profits.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “The pandemic has highlighted what we already knew about our public libraries: They are the cornerstones of their communities. For the last two years, libraries have been a lifeline to New Yorkers across the state, providing internet access at a time when broadband internet has become even more necessary in our day-to-day lives. The Statewide Digital Inclusion Grant Program will go a long way toward connecting New Yorkers to these increasingly essential services, but it can’t help anyone until we get the money out the door. It is imperative that we disburse the funding from last year’s budget and commit to fully funding our libraries so they can continue to serve the public effectively.”

Kenneth H. Stone, Deputy Director - Chief Financial Officer, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, said, “As the elevator under construction here shows, New York State Library Construction Aid is critical to providing inclusive physical access and energy efficient systems to library facilities, many of which are more than 50 years old. Digital inclusion funding helps our 37 libraries provide the community with electronic access. This includes free WiFi in and outside of library buildings, access to services such as telehealth, and assistance to connect recently arrived refugees to the online world.”

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