

NEW YORK  
STATE  
SENATE



SENATOR RACHEL MAY  
53<sup>RD</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 19th, 2020

**CONTACT**

Jessica Bumpus – (315) 810-2109  
bumpus@nysenate.gov

## **Senator Rachel May and Assemblymember Sean Ryan Send Letter to Governor in Support of Libraries**

**Syracuse, NY** - Yesterday, Senator Rachel May (D-Onondaga, Madison, Oneida) and Assemblymember Sean Ryan (149th District) sent a letter to Governor Cuomo urging him to issue an Executive Order extending the timeline for active library construction projects under the New York Library Construction Aid Program by 12 months.

The New York Library Construction Aid Program runs on a three-year implementation term. For projects that were awarded as part of the FY17-18 budget, their “due date” of June 30, 2020 is looming. Projects started in FY 2018-2019 and FY 2019-2020 face similar issues as they undergo construction delays. To be considered completed, all funds must be encumbered, and all approved project activities must be finished. With the COVID-19 closures, compliance with these completion terms is impossible.

“Libraries have always been a cornerstone in our communities, and during this pandemic they have stepped up in extraordinary ways to support our neighbors,” **said Senator May**. “The extreme circumstances COVID-19 has created will impact institutions for years to come. We must take measures to protect our libraries and ensure they are not punished for a situation outside of their control.”



THE LEGISLATURE  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

May 15, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write to you today to request that you issue an executive order extending the implementation term an additional 12 months for libraries with active projects under the New York Library Construction Aid Program. This year alone, nearly 40 libraries with projects totaling more than \$8 million are at risk of not finishing due to the COVID 19 pandemic. These projects are funded on three-year implementation terms; however, due to the delays and closures from COVID-19 these projects are unlikely to be completed within their three-year term. Failure to complete these projects in this timeframe prevents these libraries from spending their full allocation and will require them to reimburse the state for unspent funds.

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Library systems have stepped up in incredible ways throughout this pandemic. They are expanding their electronic offerings for members and providing virtual programming all while remaining a hub of information for their communities. Libraries should not be penalized for halting construction on projects in compliance with a mandatory statewide shutdown resulting in delays in project completion. An extension would allow the currently active construction projects the flexibility needed to comply with the terms of the Program in these uncertain times.

To support our libraries, we request an extension of twelve additional months from the statutory project end date for current, active projects, to complete all project activities and file a final report with the State Education Department. We urge you to issue an Executive Order that would extend the program implementation term from 36 months (Ed. Law 273a) to 48 months only for currently active projects, not as a permanent amendment to program requirements. This revision would allow the currently active programs the flexibility needed to adjust to our State's current reality.

Thank you for your hard work and leadership during these times. As always, we are grateful and ready to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Rachel May in blue ink.

Rachel May  
Senator, 53<sup>rd</sup> District

Handwritten signature of Sean M. Ryan in blue ink.

Sean M. Ryan  
Assemblymember, 149<sup>th</sup> District

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