April 3, 2025

Dear Members of Congress,

We write to you with deep concern regarding the recent Executive Order 14238, "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy," dated March 14, 2025, calling for the closure of the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the abrupt halt of its essential funding, which was approved by Congress, signed by the President, and earlier this week resulted in all IMLS staff being placed on administrative leave. As publishers, we are unwavering in our support for libraries, which play a critical role in our communities and shared commitment to a literate, informed society and democracy.

Every American has the right to access information and books that showcase a diversity of perspectives and experiences. Books build empathy, offer knowledge, and explore complex topics in long form. Libraries are essential community hubs that provide free access to these valuable tools and resources. Defunding libraries would result in mass closures and the destruction of a system that today benefits millions of Americans.

While IMLS funding is just 0.003% of the federal budget, it has tremendous impact, supporting more than 125,000 libraries in communities across the country, from major urban centers to rural areas and small towns. Public libraries in the United States receive more than 1.3 billion in-person patron visits every year, and even more people access libraries' resources virtually. Rural libraries are critical to their communities, serving as an essential center for information, education, and connection.

30+ million Americans rely on their public libraries for internet access—a fundamental necessity in today's world. In rural areas, 83% of libraries are the only source of free internet access in their communities. IMLS helps libraries bridge the digital divide by providing digital resources that assist community members with finding employment, applying for government services, and completing schoolwork.

Libraries are welcoming, safe spaces for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to gather, learn, and grow. Through IMLS grants, libraries have expanded their essential educational programs, including summer reading initiatives for children, career development training, family story hours, and community

health workshops. These offerings foster well-being, combat isolation, and empower citizens to take control of their health.

We call on you to reject the executive order to close IMLS and to restore its funding. Allowing the IMLS to be defunded, and thus to disappear, would leave millions of Americans without access to the books, tools, and other resources required to participate in the modern world. Shuttering IMLS would be an act of monumental neglect, violating the very foundation of America and what it stands for as a country. It would undermine the tenets of our democracy and our citizens' right to read, think, and learn freely. As President William McKinley once said, "The free man cannot be long an ignorant man."

Join us in standing with libraries and the communities they serve. The future of our nation depends on it.

Signed:

Penguin Random House

Hachette Book Group

Macmillan Publishers

Simon & Schuster

Sourcebooks