

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 13, 2023

The Honorable Michael L. Parson  
Governor of Missouri  
P.O. Box 720  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Governor Parson,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent decision by the Missouri House of Representatives to pass a budget that removed all state funding for public libraries. If enacted into law, this decision would have a devastating impact on hundreds of local libraries that provide critical services to the people of Missouri and communities throughout our state.

Libraries are more than just buildings filled with books. They are vital community centers that provide access to information, education, and resources to people from all walks of life. They are a safe haven for children and teenagers to study, learn, and grow. They are a place where seniors can come together to socialize and engage in lifelong learning. They are a resource for job seekers, entrepreneurs, and small business owners.

In short, libraries play an invaluable role in our society. They are a cornerstone of our democracy, providing free and equal access to information and resources for all. They are also deeply rooted in our nation's history, dating back to Benjamin Franklin, who founded the first public library in America nearly 300 years ago.

Moreover, libraries are an essential part of our state's infrastructure, providing valuable services to citizens and communities that cannot easily be replicated by private companies, nonprofits, or local governments. In addition to providing access to books, libraries offer free internet access, technology training, job search resources, and a range of educational and cultural programs. I implore you to consider the significantly positive impact that libraries have on our state and citizens and work against any attempt at defunding these institutions.

The removal of the library budget will also disproportionately affect low-income and rural communities that may not have access to other resources. Rural libraries are often the libraries most dependent on our state funding, and any effort to defund libraries statewide would make it difficult for many of them to continue to operate. Furthermore, a decision like this could imperil federal funds for public libraries, which totaled \$3.4 million to the state of Missouri last year. Cutting library funding is a short-sighted, counterproductive, and self-defeating decision that would pose long-term consequences for our state's economy, education, and quality of life.

I urge you to ensure the protection of our state's library budget and safeguard funding for these incredibly important institutions. Our state's citizens and communities deserve access to

information and resources that libraries provide, and we should do everything in our power to ensure that these essential services continue to be available to all Missourians.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and please let me know if there is anything I can do to be helpful.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Emanuel Cleaver, II". The signature is stylized with a large, circular loop for the letter 'C' and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress