



**TESTIMONY OF  
PATRICIA A. TUMULTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
On A222/S2171  
Before the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee  
Before the Assembly Appropriations Committee**

**June 19, 2017**

On behalf of the members of the New Jersey Library Association and the New Jersey Library Trustee Association, I thank Senators Bateman, Greenstein and Stack for their leadership on S2171, The New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act. The bill has strong bi-partisan support in both houses with over 50 members of the Legislature signing on. Sponsors from twenty-eight of the forty legislative districts support S2171, and its companion bill A222. The strong support speaks volumes to the demonstrated need for this legislation in many communities throughout New Jersey.

It has been more than 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. The funding transformed library service for many communities with the addition of new computer facilities, upgraded teen centers and large community meeting rooms. Today's libraries are community centers—people use them for job searches, financial literacy education, and as places to meet and exchange ideas. Last year there were over 44 million visitors to New Jersey's public libraries.

This legislation gives the question of issuing \$125 million in bonds to the voters of New Jersey in November. If they say yes, the bonds will be authorized.

S2171 will provide a tremendous economic impact across New Jersey. The projects completed with the first \$45 million bond act fifteen years ago resulted in over \$200 million of construction. Passage of this legislation will stimulate the economy by creating construction jobs across New Jersey. It will also promote small business opportunities with purchases to upgrade facilities, replace worn out furnishings, and improve both technology and physical access.

The need today is greater than ever. In late 2014, the New Jersey Library Association conducted a Capital Improvement Survey to assess construction needs. Many vital needs were put forth.

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

Due to the challenging economic times, few libraries receive regular capital appropriations. S2171 is desperately needed by many communities. Improving access to libraries, for senior citizens, children, and disabled people serves some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for considering S2171. Libraries build communities. This capital spending will transform many New Jersey libraries into vibrant community and education centers for residents of all ages. It is an investment in the future of the citizens of New Jersey.