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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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November 17, 2009

Dear Members of Council,

I am writing to ask for your support of Council President Shields' proposal to provide stopgap funding to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP), which I understand is scheduled for a vote tomorrow, Wednesday, November 18, 2009. The Shields proposal is a key component of the overall solutions, including the long-term funding that I and my colleagues are seeking in Harrisburg. However, the other funding prospects are caught up in more complex legislative negotiations, namely the City Budget and the State Budget (just a moment ago I learned that we do not expect to vote table games until December). Accordingly, I wanted to convey to you all how very crucial I believe the Shields proposal to be in addressing the immediate concern: ensure these libraries do not close on February 1.

I do understand the concerns some of you have raised regarding the need to implement accountability measures and/or approve the City's General Fund budget prior to this vote. I most certainly share some of those concerns. However, I ask that you not view any of these proposals as competing. I also ask you to see the library problem for what it is: a short term problem and a long term problem. Most immediately we must prevent branch closures that are schedule to occur on February 1. I believe that it is entirely within your hands to prevent those closures by adopting the Shields legislation. You would also have the ability to repeal the Shields/stopgap measure in the future, should other considerations, including, but not limited to, CLP's accountability, your future adoption of a General Fund budget, and the State's authorization of the local share in gaming, require a change in course.

I know that we all agree on the need to resolve the long-term issues of library funding and accountability. But we must deal with the short-term problems, so that we can then work on the long term issues. Without short term funding in place, there really is nothing to compel the CLP Board to change course in their December 14 board meeting. I ask for your help, so that together we may essentially compel CLP to place a moratorium on the closure plan. Please do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Shields' proposal is a good and necessary measure for the immediate future of our libraries. By approving this legislation tomorrow, you will ensure that these libraries stay open. I and my constituents truly need your support.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and will make myself available according to your schedule. Please do not hesitate to call me on my cell: (412) 498-9036.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chelsa Wagner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chelsa Wagner

cc: Senator Jay Costa
Save Our Libraries Community Advocates
CLP Board of Trustees