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STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Education
Energy
Local Governments
Science & Technology
Tourism, Parks, Arts & Sports Development

February 27, 2026

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
New York State Capital Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

On behalf of the School Library Systems of New York, we in the Western New York Legislative Delegation urge the state to formally integrate school library expertise into New York's media literacy initiatives, including the DHSES Media Literacy Toolkit.

For decades, School Library Systems have established statewide coherence in media literacy education, and school librarians deliver this instruction every day. Through the Empire State Information Fluency Continuum (ESIFC) and the AASL Standards, librarians teach students to question sources, evaluate evidence, identify bias, and understand the social and civic context of information – competencies that directly align with the state's media literacy goals. Librarians provide sustained, curriculum-embedded instruction and collaborate with teachers across content areas, ensuring that media literacy is not an isolated activity but an integrated component of student learning. Regionally, School Library Systems reinforce this work through professional development, longstanding partnerships with organizations such as Ithaca College's Project Look Sharp and the News Literacy Project, and more than a decade of leadership in inquiry-based pedagogy.

New York now has an opportunity to build on this foundation. By formally recognizing and elevating the work already underway in school libraries and School Library Systems, the state can unify its media literacy, inquiry, and CR-S priorities into a coherent and sustainable statewide educational strategy.

The 2026 DHSES media literacy RFP and the existing Media Literacy Toolkit mark important steps forward. Their impact will be significantly strengthened by aligning them with the instructional infrastructure already present in schools. New York has articulated a clear vision for student readiness through the Portrait of a Graduate, the NY Inspires plan, and the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Framework. Each calls for students to think critically, communicate effectively, and participate responsibly in a global society. Media literacy is the connective thread across all three; however, the state's efforts remain siloed. School library programs offer the cohesive statewide framework needed to unify these priorities.

The DemocracyReady NY coalition, joined by NYSUT, educators, students, and civic leaders, has called on state lawmakers to invest strategically in civic education, media literacy, and professional learning to prepare every student for thoughtful civic participation. Their recommendations include funding for media and AI literacy; expanding access to the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness; sustained professional learning; and ensuring that every school has a certified school librarian. These proposals align directly with the work school librarians are already leading statewide.

Certified school librarians are uniquely qualified to lead this work. They hold graduate-level degrees in library and information science; complete state-approved preparation programs grounded in pedagogy, inquiry, and information sciences; and maintain professional certification requiring ongoing study in literacy, instructional design, digital citizenship, and emerging technologies. This specialized expertise positions librarians as the educators best prepared to guide students and educators through an increasingly complex media, civic, and technological landscape.

We urge you to take decisive action to unify these efforts. Specifically, we ask that you:

1. Support the DemocracyReady NY funding proposals, including investments in media and AI literacy, the expansion of the Seal of Civic Readiness, and most importantly, funding to ensure a certified school librarian in every school;
2. Ensure that all state-led media literacy initiatives, including the DHSES RFP and Media Literacy Toolkit, formally integrate and rely on the expertise of certified school librarians and School Library Systems; and
3. Affirm the role of certified school librarians as the state's instructional leaders in media literacy, embedding their expertise in any statewide strategy, guidance, professional learning, or implementation framework moving forward.

In an era of mis- and disinformation, algorithmic influence, and rapid technological change, New York must position its most qualified educators, certified school librarians, at the center of this work. Doing so will allow the state to move beyond fragmented initiatives and build a nationally recognized model for developing a resilient, discerning, and informed digital citizenry.

We thank you for your consideration of these asks and encourage you to reach out should you need further information.

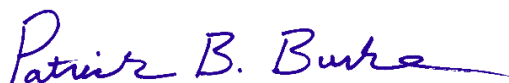
Sincerely,



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