



State of Wisconsin

COUNCIL ON LIBRARY AND NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

August 20, 2018

Terry Katsma
Legislative Council Study Committee Member
705 Erie Avenue
Oostburg, WI 53070

Dear Mr. Katsma,

The Wisconsin Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) recognizes the importance of the Common School Fund to the health and vitality of public school district library programs. For many school districts, the Common School Fund provides the only funding specifically designated for library resources. This funding is dedicated to books, magazines, ebooks, and online encyclopedias and databases, as well as computers, and instructional technology purchased for library programs.

Considering the rapid evolution of technology, the Department of Public Instruction regularly engages with school librarians and other district leaders to update the guidance for appropriate use of the funds. This ensures each district is able to invest in the best resources to improve student learning in their schools.

The reduction or loss of the Common School Fund would have significant negative impacts on schools statewide by potentially eliminating the ability of children to have the valuable experiences of inquiry, exploration, and collaboration through libraries. In many rural areas of our state, the school library is the primary support for literacy resources and programming.

The Common School Fund is managed by the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) and has a long history of being very stable due to the internal review process. Adjusting the investment approach in a way that might place the level of funding at risk should be avoided. The slow chipping away of revenue sources will have a deleterious effect on the long-term value of the fund. Given the core role of the Common School Fund for school library programs, any significant variation or depletion in funding would create significant hardships for the students of Wisconsin.

COLAND opposes actions that would prevent Common School Fund disbursements from being spent on school libraries, end the BCPL Trust Fund Loan Program, diminish other revenue sources contributing to the Common School Fund, or change how these funds are managed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryan J. McCormick".

Bryan McCormick, COLAND Chair

BJM/abh

cc: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction