

Sheila de la Guerra **Public Comment**

From: Teralyn Evans-Gutiérrez
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2026 8:14 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Public Comment - 4/13 Workshop - Community Services Department
Attachments: Library Advisory Committee Public Comment.pdf

Good morning Clerks,

Please see the attached letter from the Library Advisory Committee as public comment in support of CSD under the “**Community Resources & Public Facilities**” functional group.

Best,



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**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
LIBRARY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

April 13, 2026

Members

1st District Representative
Patricia Saley

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Patricia Saley
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Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

2nd District Representative
Sharon Hoshida

3rd District Representative
Judith Dale

4th District Representative
Barbara Raggio

5th District Representative
Carol Gregor

City Representatives

Buellton Representative

Hudson Hornick

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Carpinteria Representative

Glynn Birdwell

Glynn Birdwell
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CSA 3 Representative

Alex Rodriguez

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Goleta Representative

Irene Solovij

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Guadalupe Representative

Deborah Sykes

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Lompoc Representative

Cara Carucci

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Santa Barbara Representative

Amber Caldwell

Amber Caldwell
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Santa Maria Representative

Suzanne Hajnik

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Solvang Representative

Mark Infanti

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Library Directors

Zone 1 Santa Barbara Library Director

Brandon Beaudette

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Brandon Beaudette
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Zone 2 Lompoc Library Director

Sarah Bleyl

Sarah Bleyl
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Zone 3 Santa Maria Library Director

Dawn Jackson

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Zone 4 Goleta Library Director

Elizabeth Saucedo

Elizabeth Saucedo
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Signed by:

Zone 5 Carpinteria Library Director

Eric Castro

Eric Castro
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Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

We are writing as the Santa Barbara County Library Advisory Committee to express our position regarding the proposed budget cuts and their potential impact on our county's library system. We understand the need for a 4% budget cut for this next fiscal year and that it is a necessary measure amid the current financial challenges. However, we are deeply concerned that further cuts to library per-capita and other funding beyond this fiscal year will be harmful to our community.

The Socioeconomic Impact of Libraries

Our libraries are not merely places for books; they are community infrastructure that fosters education, economic opportunity, and public safety. Every dollar invested in libraries yields significant returns in community development. Studies show that for every \$1 invested in libraries there is a \$4 return in public social services. They empower individuals through literacy programs, workforce development, and lifelong learning opportunities. The value of our libraries is not only reflected in the services they provide but also in the strong communities they help build.

Libraries as a Community Safety Net

Libraries serve as vital hubs of support, offering resources that are particularly crucial during periods of declining government services, as well as during emergencies and disasters. They provide safe, inclusive spaces for our most vulnerable families, enabling access to educational and technological resources. In times of crisis, libraries have acted as emergency response and resiliency centers, facilitating communication and connection for those in need.

Key Social Impacts of Library Investment

- **Literacy and Education:** Our libraries boost literacy through early childhood education and programs that improve reading scores. Specialized support can minimize the likelihood of low reading scores for many students.
- **Economic Development & Employment:** Our libraries support job seekers by offering career guidance, resume workshops, and small business support, contributing significantly to local economic growth.
- **Social Infrastructure & Safety:** By offering free, accessible spaces, libraries promote social cohesion and serve as safe, productive environments that can contribute to lower crime rates.
- **Community Health and Wellness:** Our libraries act as trusted community anchors, providing safe spaces that tackle social isolation and connect individuals with health information and services.
- **Digital Equity and Inclusion:** Our libraries bridge the digital divide by offering free internet access, computer training, and lending hotspots - essential services for our most vulnerable communities.

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Investing in Social Determinants of Health

Committing to protected funding for libraries is a smart and cost-effective investment in social determinants of health. Libraries are trusted and accessible spaces where resources are accessed early and affordably, directly contributing to better community outcomes. Addressing social determinants of health upstream prevents crises downstream, reducing reliance on costly emergency services.

Without access to resources such as early literacy skills and workforce development, our community faces substantial downstream costs. Poor academic performance and reduced literacy rates can delay access to job training and increase reliance on social services and emergency aid, which are far more expensive in the long run.

Addressing social determinants of health upstream prevents crises downstream. When libraries are underfunded, we see an increase in costs associated with emergency services and social welfare programs, which only serve to treat the symptoms rather than prevent the issues.

Acknowledging the Board's Predicament

We recognize the challenging position the Board is in, particularly given the federal cuts to health and human services that have necessitated the County to backfill critical services. This situation underscores the importance of adequately funding libraries, as they can and do absorb and support essential services for our community.

Our Recommendations

In light of these challenges, we propose the following recommendations for the Board's consideration:

1. **Stable Funding:** Establish a more reliable funding structure for libraries to ensure they can continue serving our communities effectively.
2. **Equity in Resource Allocation:** Prioritize equitable funding across communities, ensuring that the libraries serving our most vulnerable populations are not disproportionately affected.
3. **Collaboration and Support:** Recognize the collaborative efforts our library system has undertaken over the past 18 months to improve resource sharing and programming.

A Call to Action

We stand in alignment with the Board's efforts to address the budget efficiently while advocating for the necessary resources to sustain our library system. We urge you to consider the invaluable role libraries play in our communities and to protect them in your final budget decisions.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your support in ensuring that our libraries continue to thrive as essential community resources.

Sincerely,

Santa Barbara County Library Advisory Committee