

Lisa Driscoll

From: Gary and Jean Pokorny <gjpokorn@lmi.net>
Sent: Sunday, July 25, 2021 9:14 AM
To: Lisa Driscoll
Subject: We Support Measure X Funding for Libraries in Contra Costa County

Lisa,

Please provide this email to members of the Measure X Commission.

Thank you.

Gary & Jean Pokorny

Good Day Measure X Commissioners,

As residents and taxpayers of Contra Costa County we fully and enthusiastically support the use of Measure X funding to increase access to the many vital services that our County Libraries provide for residents of our county, with special emphasis upon how library access is a critical issue for persons of limited means..

We cannot think of any other service that meets the intent of why we supported Measure X as well as do expanded library hours. Library access, as requested in our County Librarian Alison McKee's proposal to have the County Library fully fund 56 hours of service at all libraries county-wide does this.

As you undoubtedly know, the ballot measure stated that Measure X funding is to be used, among other things: 1) for critical safety net services; 2) to invest in early childhood services; 3) to protect vulnerable populations; and 4) to fund "other essential services."

During the recent pandemic we learned again that our libraries provide critical internet access for families and children who otherwise do not have access to the internet from their home setting, either because they do not have a computer or an internet connection. This proved critical as schools shifted to on-line schooling.

Increasingly, job openings and applications are being handled through the internet. For unemployed workers seeking gainful employment, access to a computer and on-line connection is critical. Libraries enable low income families to gain this access. Increased open hours will make access more available to all.

Likewise, free and available access to written materials, newspapers, books, periodicals is critical for families of limited means and our libraries provide this access free to all. Being able to get into the libraries after work and on weekends is critical for workers and their families. Increasing hours to 56 per week will increase accessibility.

Our libraries in Contra Costa County have been leaders in providing English as a Second Language programs and adult Literacy programs for years. Having the ability to make such programs accessible during evenings and weekends will assist many who have the desire to improve their situation, but otherwise lack access to resources to do so.

During recent excess heat and air quality emergencies, libraries have served as cooling centers and as clean air respites. Increasing hours will increase the likelihood that libraries are available when such refuge is most needed.

And, of course, one of the most effective early childhood learning opportunities is library story time programs. Having increased access to these programs at convenient hours is vital for families of limited means.

Over the years we have observed that, in the highest income communities, local city council members have recognized the value of library services by augmenting the hours that the County has been able to provide. Meanwhile communities of lower income have struggled to do so. Providing a robust 56 hours of library service county-wide will make significant progress to equalize support for vulnerable populations county-wide.

Please support our County Library's request for more equitable and robust library service through the investment of Measure X dollars to keep all our libraries accessible to the greatest number of our citizens.

Thank you,

Gary & Jean Pokorny
2221 Spyglass Lane, El Cerrito, CA