

February 4, 2021

OLA Board
Oregon Library Association
P.O. Box 3067
LaGrande, OR 97850

Dear OLA Board member:

We urge members of the OLA Board to take immediate action to advocate on behalf of Oregon library staff with the Governor's Office and any other governmental agencies to vaccinate library workers in Phase 1B. Library workers care deeply about the communities they serve, which includes doing their part to keep patrons as well as themselves safe during this pandemic. Libraries serve as important community hubs for connection. This recommendation is supported by the recently-passed ALA Resolution (CD#45) recommending library workers be listed as a priority workforce (attached).

Libraries are busy, well-loved community spaces making them inherently risky places for both staff and patrons right now. Libraries around the country have taken the difficult but necessary action of reducing services and increasing safety measures for the sake of broader community health. That said, **no safety measure would be as effective as vaccinating library workers against COVID-19 as quickly as possible.** It will not only significantly reduce their risk of their own infection, but that of community spread as well.

To protect the people keeping the hearts of our communities running, **we strongly urge that library workers in Oregon receive the COVID-19 vaccination during Phase 1B**, along with childhood providers, early learning and K-12 educators and staff. This is also consistent with recommendations from the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). [According to the library advocacy group EveryLibrary](#), "Librarians and library workers were identified in July 2020 as among the 'workers at greatest risk for exposure to infectious diseases' and among those whose '[o]ccupational groups are most likely to be exposed to infection or disease more than one time per month.' The APIC Interim Guidance grouped all 'education, training, and library' workers alongside healthcare practitioners and technical, healthcare support, protective services, personal care and service, and community support workers as 'essential'.

At various times throughout the pandemic, libraries throughout Oregon have provided a variety of in-person patron services. These services include but are not limited to: curbside delivery, access to and assistance with computers, reference services, indoor holds pickup, indoor browsing, help with self-check machines, book distribution at free lunch sites, outreach to daycare centers, schools, WIC offices, and other tabling at non-library events, and so much more.

Libraries across the country are tried-and-true economic and workforce development hubs. Our Community's economic recovery depends immeasurably on library workers and the continued existence of their positions as the work begins. Libraries are typically the only place in town supplying free Wi-Fi and computer use to all residents. Libraries are vital for providing access to people in need, especially for unemployment and other social benefits. This is just one-way libraries are necessary and important to their communities as we begin to recover from the pandemic crisis.

Currently library workers daily handle materials, touch communal surfaces, share computers, assist with technology use, clean all manner of messes, and conduct checkout and reference transactions, risking COVID-19 exposure with most basic on-site tasks. Public library workers are highly likely to be in proximity with a wide variety of community members. Meanwhile, libraries around the country have closed [again](#) and [again](#) because of staff cases.

In closing, we urge members of the OLA Board to take immediate action on this matter to ensure the health and safety of library workers.

Signed,

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