

March 13, 2018

Governor Kate Brown
900 Court St., Suite 254
Salem, OR 97031-4047

Governor Brown:

We were shocked and bewildered to hear about your office's recent decision to dismiss State Librarian MaryKay Dahlgreen. Both the State Library and Dahlgreen have been invaluable partners in the Oregon Library Association's efforts to support libraries, library workers, and the patrons they serve statewide. We are confused about this seemingly sudden decision, made without consultation with key stakeholders and despite Dahlgreen's strong track record as agency head.

As you know, the State Library serves many stakeholders throughout the state, including the 1,200 public, academic, school, and special library staff and trustees in our association and the libraries at which they work. While we understand that the State Librarian serves at the pleasure of the Governor, we are struggling to understand why the views of several State Library constituents such as ourselves were not considered in this decision.

This lack of consultation comes as a particular disappointment due to our past support for HB 3523 during the 2015 legislative session. Among many other changes to the State Library, that bill made the State Librarian a Governor-appointed position rather than being appointed by the State Library Board. We supported the legislation because we felt that being a Governor-appointee would give the State Librarian the same stature and level of accountability as other executive department heads. We were not expecting that it would result in unilateral decisions regarding the State Librarian's job performance.

That same legislation reorganized the State Library Board to ensure that it represented the variety of stakeholders whom the State Library serves: libraries and library staff such as ourselves, other state executive agencies, and the blind and otherwise print-disabled patrons of the Talking Book and Braille Library. This composition was intended to aid the State Library Board in its primary charge: to review and monitor the State Library and, by extension, the State Librarian. The State Library Board was not consulted in this decision, violating the spirit of cooperation with which we supported HB 3523 and silencing the voices of some of the State Library's most important constituents.

Had we been consulted, we would have told you that our Association and its members hold Dahlgreen in high esteem. In 1996, she became much-beloved among public libraries statewide - from Portland to Burns - for her invaluable assistance as Youth Services Consultant. Her

consulting work was so respected that OLA honored Dahlgreen in 2003 with our highest honor for children's services, the Evelyn Sibley Lampman Award. Other libraries came to know Dahlgreen when she became Program Manager for Library Development Services in 2005. In that capacity, she managed approximately \$2 million in federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds that support all Oregon libraries, from providing free, high-quality electronic resources for all Oregonians to supporting the essential work being done in library Summer Reading programs. Dahlgreen also hired a strong group of library development consultants who are well-regarded by libraries throughout Oregon.

We have been similarly impressed with Dahlgreen's time as State Librarian. For her entire tenure in that position, Dahlgreen has overseen the legislature-directed reorganization of the State Library, making several tough decisions that had been put off for years: closing the public reference room, relocating the Willamette Valley Genealogical Society, and transferring the Oregon Poetry Collection to the University of Oregon Library, to name a few. She has found efficiencies that reduced duplication of services across state agencies and external entities, resulting in a lean operation: the State Library's 40 FTE employees are managed by only four managers, including the State Librarian. Thanks to Dahlgreen's efforts, the State Library is well-respected statewide and nationwide. This respect is evident in the agency's overall customer satisfaction rating of 95% in their most recent annual performance measures.

While we feel that Dahlgreen's tenure has been admirable, we understand that you now are looking to the future of the State Library. We ask that you please involve both OLA and the State Library Board in that process. Our members possess expertise that will prove valuable both for short-term succession planning and for selecting a new State Librarian who will be accepted and respected in the Oregon library community, respect that is essential to the position and the agency's success. I am happy to speak with you and your staff further about how OLA can assist you in the upcoming weeks. In the meanwhile, I hope that you will keep us apprised of any further developments regarding the State Library.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Buzzy Nielsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "B" and "N".

Buzzy Nielsen
OLA President, 2017-18

cc: OLA members
State Library Board
Senate President Peter Courtney
Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick
Senate Republican Leader Jackie Winters
Sen. James Manning, Co-Chair, General Government SubCommittee
Rep. Greg Smith, Co-Chair, General Government SubCommittee
OLA lobbyist Amanda Dalton