

Attn: Montana Chapter 55 Committee

March 31, 2022

Albert Einstein once said- “The only thing that you absolutely have to know, is the location of the library.”¹ As a person who was born and raised in the State of Montana, I am very proud of Montana seeking excellence in everything we do. In the area of education, we have strived for excellence. We have implemented standards and expectations through out the history of education in this state. We have established in our State Constitution- Indian Education For All- a gold standard in including Native Americans and their history in our schools. We have always supported librarians at every level. We strive for excellence and what other states do is not of our concern. Today, I am writing to discuss the possible changing of the requirement of the number of our librarians in our schools.

We need to, at a minimum, maintain the number of school librarians Montana currently has in place. Now, more than ever, our students need to learn how to evaluate and find quality information. They need to learn how to solve problems. Students need to read and have access to literature. Numerous studies have shown that literacy and test scores increase when a school has a qualified certified librarian. In fact, in Idaho, a study concerning school librarians stated: “Where administrators value strong library programs and can see them doing their part for student success, students are more likely to thrive academically. This is the over-arching conclusion that can be drawn from the latest study of the impact of school libraries--this one in Idaho. The study included survey responses from 176 principals and other administrators.”² School librarians are important to our students, staff and communities.

In Montana, we have a challenge in recruiting and retaining qualified teacher- librarians and teachers in general. Is it true that some schools have not had a qualified librarians apply for their positions? Yes, I personally know a principal who will hire a qualified librarian if they applied for his position. However, are there districts that do not hire or seek qualified librarians but seek a variance instead? I know personally that is also true. As combat veteran, a K-12 Librarian endorsement holder and having a master’s degree, I have applied for numerous positions in Montana. In two cases, I never received an interview and in those two districts, they hired two non- librarian endorsed teachers instead. In another, when I inquired about an interview and the high school librarian position, they wrote me and said that they decided to go a different direction. Was that direction seeking a variance? I do wonder. I am not saying that I was a perfect fit for any of these particular positions- however, at a minimum if a qualified teacher-librarian applies for a position, you should at least offer them interview.

The bottom line is we need teacher-librarians in our schools. We need to maintain these numbers if we want schools of excellence. We need as a state to figure out why qualified teacher librarians are not seeking these jobs or find out why districts are not even getting qualified librarians a shot at interview. The studies support how effective teacher-librarians are at increasing test scores and literacy in our schools. I implore you not to lower our standards but seek solutions to attract the best in our communities.

Sincerely, Angela F. Archuleta, KW Vina Elementary, Browning School District 9

¹ “Famous Library Quotes | Library.” Fairfax County Virginia, Official site of the County of Fairfax, Virginia, 1 Jan. 2022, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/famous-library-quotes.

² Lance, Keith Curry. “ERIC - EJ886979 - The Impact of School Libraries on Academic Achievement: A Research Study Based on Responses from Administrators in Idaho, School Library Monthly, 2010-May.” ERIC, School Library Monthly, 30 Apr. 2010, eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ886979.