

Statement In Support of FY 2017-2022 DCPL Capital Budget
Committee on Education
April 2016

Chairman Grosso and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Board of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly (SWNA), the membership of which consists of all Southwest DC residents 18 years of age and over. As you may know, SWNA is a citizen's association with a 50-year history and we pride ourselves on working to maintain a diverse neighborhood as we pursue our mission of enhancing the quality of life in our quadrant of the city. We consider the SW Library to be one of the core institutions of our community and for that reason we wish to voice our support for the \$18 million allocation in the FY 2017-2022 Capital Budget for the construction of a new Southwest Library. Indeed, we actually believe this amount may not be sufficient to achieve the kind of building our community deserves and would encourage consideration of a larger budget but, at a minimum, this amount must be preserved for its intended use.

The rationale for building a new library is easily established. Our current library has limited capability for renovation within its existing walls. The electrical wiring architecture is insufficient for the needs of 21st Century patrons and efforts to update it have proven unsuccessful. The HVAC system and elevator are also nearing the end of their useful lives. A new, energy efficient structure is needed. Beyond this, as we have witnessed other state of the art facilities being established by DCPL, it has become clear that the features that have been incorporated into them are badly needed in Southwest. It is no secret that our neighborhood is going through a transition, due to development, as significant as any being experienced by any DC community and the Library is and needs to be an anchor institution during this process. Without a vastly improved kind of facility, the Southwest Library cannot play that role in the future.

Maintaining the current funding level is critical to ensure that Southwest will not only receive a 21st century library but also be able to provide frequent library users with a conveniently located interim library. The Library provides valuable services to the entire Southwest Community and a presence will be needed during the construction phase.

SWNA and the Southwest Community feel strongly enough about this issue that we have formed a taskforce, in conjunction with Friends of the Southwest Library, to monitor the status of the capital budget, to ensure that the full funding is kept intact, to work with DCPL on the design process for a new library, and to be as involved as possible throughout the duration of the construction. We intend to pay very careful attention to how this line item is treated in the budget process, and urge this Committee, the Council in general, and the Mayor to ensure that Southwest is enjoying a new Library funded by the money currently allocated for it.

Respectfully,
Bruce Levine

Bruce A. Levine
President
Southwest Neighborhood Assembly
Chair, New Library Task Force
president@swna.org