



MINNESOTA LIBRARY
A S S O C I A T I O N

4/3/2025

Re: Support for SF1661

Dear Senate Capital Investment Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of SF1661. Thank you also to Chair Pappas for authoring this bill and for your support of public libraries.

I write on behalf of the Minnesota Library Association and as director of Great River Regional Library, one of Minnesota's 12 regional public library systems, which operates 32 libraries across six counties in Central Minnesota.

SF1661 asks that the library construction grant program be renamed in honor of Rep. Mary Murphy, an educator and a long-time champion of public libraries. Rep. Murphy was the longest-serving female legislator in Minnesota, serving from 1977-2022. Through her leadership, over 120 libraries have been made more accessible to better serve residents across the state. This bill honors her amazing legacy.

From 1994-2024, the Public Library Construction Grant program has secured approximately \$6.27 in local investment for every \$1 in state investment. This competitive matching grant provides funding to renovate, expand, or construct a public library.

Across the state, over 150 projects have been completed through this program. A quarter of the public library buildings in Great River Regional Library have been improved - through projects of all sizes. In Foley, the city added an automatic door opener button. In Staples and St. Michael, new libraries were built within shared city centers. In Little Falls and Sauk Centre, elevators were added, preserving two Carnegie libraries. Most recently, Howard Lake opened the first net-zero library building in Minnesota, thanks, in part, to these funds.

There is still a lot of work to do to improve and preserve our state's public library buildings. Over 45 public libraries across the state need repairs, expansion or new construction, totaling over \$175M. Continuing the work of this grant program is vital to public library users across the state.

The Minnesota library community supports renaming this vital program in Rep. Mary Murphy's honor. This move will recognize her amazing legacy as a public library advocate. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Pundsack
Executive Director
Great River Regional Library