

For Immediate Release



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The Delaware Library Association (DLA) and the Friends of Delaware Libraries (FODL), with assistance from EveryLibrary, recently conducted a survey of all candidates running for office in Delaware to gauge their support for school and public libraries and gain their insights regarding current issues facing libraries.

School libraries play a crucial role in fostering academic success by providing students with access to a variety of resources, teaching essential information literacy skills, and offering personalized assistance to enhance learning outcomes. Unfortunately, Delaware faces significant challenges in this area, ranking 45th nationally in educational achievement. As of the 2022-2023 academic year, Delaware is 47th out of 50 states and D.C. in the number of full-time librarians and 31st in the number of students per librarian.

The Delaware State Legislature has supported the renovation, expansion, and construction of new public libraries through Bond Bills. Over the past decade, Delaware has also increased the Library Standards budget by about \$2 million. However, this amount has not kept pace with the operational growth of public libraries. An increase of \$2.25 million in Library Standards is needed to align funding with the expanded library square footage and range of services libraries offer.

The Candidate Questionnaire was launched to inform the public about the positions of their candidates on these school and public library issues. With a survey response rate of 65%, respondents overwhelmingly expressed their support for school and public libraries. Selected and summarized responses include:

- 83% strongly agree that all students should have access to school libraries and state-certified school library media specialists.
- 100% of respondents agree or strongly agree that librarians are essential to student success and are a crucial part of the education system.
- 87% of candidates support additional operational funding for public libraries in Delaware, with 70% stating they support increasing funding by \$2.25 million to align with Bond Bill funding to ensure libraries can meet community needs.
- 87% of candidates agree or strongly agree literacy programs that promote individual learning and the exploration of new ideas and topics are a vital part of public libraries.

Go to the DLA website at <https://dla.lib.de.us/> for the complete list of the questions, cumulative responses, and a list of those who responded.

Reported by Catherine Wimberley, Chair of the DLA Legislative Action Committee. Address any questions or comments to her at catherinewimberley.dla@gmail.com.