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MEDIA RELEASE

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Statement from Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Chairman Jack Connors & Lancaster Public Library President Suzanne Jacobs

We are extremely disappointed that the Erie County Legislature voted to deny the public their right to determine the future of our 37 Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries by opposing the creation of a Special Library District.

We had hoped that together, the Library and Legislature would take a forward step and provide a sustainable solution to the Library System's decades-long, roller-coaster funding. Three key points about the creation of a Library District were continuously miscommunicated by the members of the Legislature. For clarification:

1. Creation of a Library District would not add a layer of government. In fact, it would consolidate 23 independent library governing bodies into one and 23 different civil service hiring authorities into one.
2. Creation of a Library District would not mean double taxation or create an additional tax. Once approved, NY State's Tax Cap law requires the State Comptroller's office to lower the County's tax cap by the amount of costs transferred from the County to the Library District. The current Library Tax found on Erie County tax bills would be zeroed out. Voter-approved library funds would be stated as: Library District Tax.
3. Additionally, the fundamental difference between a Library District compared to lighting, sewer, and other districts is that the people vote to create and fund a Library District.

Despite the facts, a majority of the County Legislature seem not interested in giving the public – their constituents, the voters of Erie County—the opportunity to decide whether a Library District should be created and at what level it should be funded.

The 23 Library boards, representing the urban, suburban and rural libraries of Erie County, understand the district can be the key to long-term financial stability and sustainability. We are not doing anything different than what over 200 district libraries throughout New York have done—creating long-term financial stability and sustainability for our libraries.

To members of the community who use the libraries, we truly appreciate your support and will continue to work hard to serve your needs.

Thank you.

Jack Connors, chairman, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System

Suzanne Jacobs, president, Lancaster Public Library, past president Association of Contract Libraries (ACT)

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