



Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Social Services

HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION STATEMENT

Good morning Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Committee. I am Matt Brune, Executive Deputy Commissioner at the Human Resources Administration (HRA). HRA looks forward to working with the Committee and the Library system to help disseminate information to New Yorkers. While we are supportive of Intro No. 711 intention to publicize and boost utilization of the public library system, the bill's language requiring participating agencies to produce and distribute such material is of some concern.

Overview of HRA Program Recipients

Every month, HRA serves over 350,000 Cash Assistance recipients, over 1.8 million Food Stamp recipients and close to 3 million public health insurance and Medicaid recipients. Within these three programs, there are over 1.4 million recipients under the age of 25. Presently we provide assistance to many children who are part of our various program caseloads although the majority of case heads in these programs are adults. However, there are also instances where youth are considered the head of the household and hence, have their own case.

In addition, we also serve approximately 300 families a month in our Domestic Violence Shelters, over 45,000 persons in our HIV/AIDS Services Administration, as well as many recipients in our Teen RAPP program, families and individuals through our Emergency Food Assistance Program administered by community organizations, and thousands of recipients in our Personal Care Services. With such an expansive recipient base, we are naturally concerned that this proposal as written does not specify which of our programs it would apply to and whether it encompasses case heads under 25 years of age or also children who are on their parent's case. It also does not take into account where there can be an overlap in services and recipients, not only within HRA programs, but between City agency programs as well.

Present Application Processes

Many of our programs are State programs for which HRA administers as the local social services district. The materials included in the application packet, which can be expansive, are often dictated by State Social Services Law. In fact, we regularly hear concerns over the volume of information provided to individuals at the application process and we are always working to streamline materials when possible. In addition, for two of our largest program areas of Medicaid and Food Stamps, the application process has moved away from face to face meetings towards a web based and phone application. For those taking advantage of these electronic processes, materials would have to be mailed out. Other participants receive our services through a community based organization or vendor who would then have to take on the responsibility of distributing the materials. Also, as many recipients are eligible for multiple programs, we would

need to create a new system for tracking the distribution of this information across programs and possibly families, especially when mailings are involved.

Estimated Cost

The proposal requires HRA to distribute a description of the library system, instructions and library card application for the New York, Brooklyn and Queens Public Library systems to any person under the age of 24. As the method of "distribution" is unclear in the bill, we have attempted to identify a cost based on mailing to our Food Stamp, Medicaid and Cash Assistance recipients that is unduplicated and based on an average family size of two children. For this estimate we did not include our other programs which would then increase the estimate. With that in mind, the cost of mailing this information would be slightly over \$800,000. We are also concerned about this new expense and given the likely duplication of efforts between City agencies.

Although we are very supportive of assisting the Library system to reach and become a valued resource for all New Yorkers, the cost and possible administrative complexity of this proposal is of concern to our agency. HRA would be open to discussing alternative ways to distribute this information to our clients. In particular, it might be advantageous to look towards electronic means of notification that is more cost effective. For example, the information could be posted on the NYC.gov website including new sites that focuses on teens, the very population the legislation is targeting. We could also add information to the script that recipients hear when they call into our Info line regarding services. As mentioned earlier, the library system is also welcome to provide HRA with pamphlets to distribute at our centers and we look forward to discussing options with them.



Statement by Thomas W. Galante
President and Chief Executive Officer, Queens Library

Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

Int. No. 711 - In relation to requiring various agencies to distribute information on how to
obtain a library card

November 30, 2011

Good Morning. I am Thomas W. Galante, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Queens Library. I want to begin by thanking the City Council for your incredible ongoing support of libraries. Speaker Quinn understands the value of public libraries in this great City. This committee, under the exceptional leadership of Committee Chairman Van Bramer, has been our most faithful supporter and advocate. The Queens delegation, led by Council Member Comrie, has stood up for Queens Library every year. We thank you for all you do year round. We thank this Committee, as well as the sponsors of this legislation, Council Members Van Bramer and Wills, for the opportunity to testify today. This legislation is another innovative way that the City and libraries can work together to avail all New Yorkers of the unparalleled resources of the public library.

Every child must have access to information to learn and grow. A library card is the key that opens the gate to a world of information, for free, for every child, and the Library Card Act supports putting a key in every child's hands. When we are able to pattern children to be lifelong learners by visiting and using their public libraries to enrich their lives, we also set them on the path of adult economic independence. We welcome this opportunity to expand this valuable legislation to other City agencies. We all know it is easier to break into a cycle of education than to break out of a cycle of poverty.

We currently count over 256,461 library card holders under the age of 18 and that number is growing. In the last two fiscal years, we put library cards in the hands of over 55,000 new young patrons. Yet, there is much work to be done. The most recent census figures put the Queens population under the age of 18 at 461,795, which means that even with all our efforts, over 200,000 of our borough's youth don't have a library card.

Library cards do indeed unlock doors to a world of intellectual, cultural and academic riches at the library. In Queens, these cards are a golden ticket for students of every age to access robust programs and services for youth. These services go way beyond the stacks; they dovetail with their academic goals and enrich their overall experience.

In Queens, we serve all students in the borough with our collections, resources, programs and trained dedicated staff to enhance their learning experience from pre-K through post graduate and beyond to lifelong learners. This includes:

- Access to more than 6 million items, including popular youth materials and academic materials to support their schoolwork.
- Access to a network of 1,400 public use computers to get on the Internet to do homework and school assignments; a resource that a distressing number of Queens' residents do not have at home. At the same time, they become literate in a technology that will be indispensable in their lives.
- Professionally trained staff, including teen tutors and activity assistants, who offer homework help and academic support as well as engaging after-school programs.
- In most locations, including Flushing, Far Rockaway, and soon Cambria Heights, our facilities are used to provide teenage students with their own dedicated space.
- Younger patrons have the newly opened Children's Library Discovery Center, which opens the world of math, science and technology with interactive learning.
- Youth Enrichment Program with dedicated youth counselors and social workers in select locations.
- Adult Learners and Young Adult Learners initiatives offer pre-GED and GED training programs and outreach to at-risk populations.

The expansion of the Library Card Act will undoubtedly increase the number of opportunities that young New Yorkers have to access the wealth of resources just outlined. Importantly, by establishing partnerships with the Department of Homeless Services, the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Youth & Community Development, and the Human Resource Administration, we can effectively target potentially vulnerable populations who may be in particular need.

Everyone, from every background, has something to gain from using the public library. Nevertheless, there is a natural nexus between the resources that public libraries increasingly provide and those that these agencies provide - all in hopes of empowering families to beat the challenges they face – whether a language barrier, a housing problem, a need for public benefits or other domestic problems. Libraries often serve as the first point of access for a very wide variety of government services and benefits for families. Similarly, the educational opportunities the library provides can prove to be critically helpful during difficult times. Queens Library, for example, offers the largest library-based literacy program in the State, offering free GED, ESOL and adult education classes to new immigrants and at-risk youth. The more we can do to bring our resources into the spheres of families just when they are facing obstacles, the better chance they have of overcoming them.

We look forward to working with the City Council and City Agencies to implement this innovative outreach goal so it is successful. Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As always, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES
AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

**INT. NO. 711 - IN RELATION TO REQUIRING VARIOUS AGENCIES TO
DISTRIBUTE INFORMATION ON HOW TO OBTAIN A LIBRARY CARD**

250 BROADWAY

November 30, 2011

TESTIMONY OF BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Good morning. My name is Linda Johnson and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of Brooklyn Public Library (BPL). Thank you to Committee Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer for inviting BPL to testify today concerning requiring various agencies to distribute information about how to obtain a library card. Thank you to the Council as well for its continued support of public libraries and the services we provide to millions of New Yorkers every day.

Libraries serve many essential roles in our democracy: they foster creative thinking, intellectual growth, cultural understanding and professional development. It is imperative that young people have access to neighborhood libraries to not only enrich their own lives but to also better the future of our society.

For many people, a library card is one of their first forms of identification and a symbol of their membership in our community. A library card is a tool for instilling responsibility in young people and for teaching children about the importance of sharing resources with others. Obtaining a library card is often a person's first step towards meeting his neighbors at a local branch and becoming more engaged in his community.

Using a library card also introduces people to the wider world through books, videos, music and other materials. BPL offers Internet-enabled computers at all 60 of our locations and having a library card is necessary to register for computer sessions.

The library is one of the first cultural and educational institutions in which youth can participate fully, and we urge parents to apply for library cards for their children as early as possible in their children's lives. Offering library cards for youth, as well as age-appropriate programming, books and materials, is vital to our work to promote young children's early literacy development and support each parent's role as his or her child's first teacher.

One of the Library's highest priorities is serving Brooklyn's youth. We enthusiastically support amending the Library Card Act to require various agencies to distribute information on how to obtain a library card. The agencies included in the amendment—the administration for children's services, the department of homeless services, the department of youth and community development and the human resources administration—all provide essential services to many young people. Including these agencies in the Library Card Act will make it easier for BPL to reach the youth that they serve with our countless programs and resources. Furthermore, we applaud extending the Library Card Act to young persons under the age of 24 and distributing library card applications to students entering pre-kindergarten. These amendments will clearly result in more young Brooklynites making use of our resources.

Outreach

BPL is committed to conducting outreach to assist youth to apply for library cards. The Library works to build strong relationships with teachers, school librarians and principals in our borough's school system, and we encourage teachers to arrange class visits at our libraries so students can attend our programs, obtain library cards and learn more about the Library's resources. In Fiscal Year 2011 (FY 2011), the Library hosted over 2,000 class visits for school-age children and young adults, reaching an estimated 70,000 youth.

BPL staff also visit schools and back-to-school fairs and speak in classrooms, school libraries and auditoriums about the many materials, programs and services available at the Library. We regularly set up information tables and distribute library cards at neighborhood street fairs, in

city parks, and at many community events, such as the annual summer fair on the Coney Island Boardwalk; Bellevue Hospital's Library Day in June; the Brooklyn Children's Museum's Back to School Day in September; the Brooklyn Book Festival; The After School Corporation College Fair; the Department of Youth and Community Development College Fair; the annual NAACP Back to School/Stay in School event at Borough Hall in August; and at Open School Nights at numerous elementary, middle and high schools every fall and spring. In FY 2011, our staff conducted more than 350 outreach sessions outside of BPL facilities for school-age children and young adults, reaching an estimated total of 30,000 youth.

BPL's Youth Programs

BPL plays a crucial role in the development of students and other young Brooklynites, and we offer a wide array of free programs tailored to enrich their lives. Although a library card is not necessary to participate in many of our services, having one is often a precursor for young people entering our buildings and learning about the resources we offer. With greater access to library cards we believe more youth will be aware of our services. I am pleased to now highlight for you some of the valuable programs we provide to young people.

The Child's Place for Children with Special Needs

Brooklyn Public Library's Child's Place for Children with Special Needs offers all children regardless of their learning styles, from birth to age 12, a space to learn and play together. The Child's Place presents a number of programs, including After School Stories, which is a fun-filled hour of stories and crafts; Weekend Programs featuring guest performers, puppet shows, sing-alongs and more; and Our Garden Club, a program focusing on gardening and related activities.

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Program

The federally-funded national Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) program motivates children and teens to read and provides youth with free books. At BPL, RIF consists of a weekly RIF program in the Central Youth Wing and in each of BPL's 58 neighborhood libraries. Every year, approximately 120,000 free RIF books are chosen by babies, children and teens throughout Brooklyn to start their own libraries in their homes. To participate in RIF, you must be 18 years of age or younger and have a valid library card.

Kidsmobile

The Kidsmobile, a children's library on wheels, promotes reading and brings books to children across the borough. In FY 2011 the Kidsmobile visited schools, camps, juvenile detention facilities, parks, shelters and special events, serving hundreds of people per month, mostly children. The Kidsmobile also helps people obtain library cards; in the last Fiscal Year more than 1,300 people applied for library cards through the Kidsmobile.

Summer Reading Program

BPL also presents a popular Summer Reading program that encourages thousands of children and adults to read over the summer months. More than 97,000 people registered for the program in 2011, including over 50,000 children ages 6-12 and 16,000 teens. Throughout the course of Summer Reading we offered more than 6,000 programs to over 135,000 attendees. Patrons participated in book discussions, workshops, film screenings and a writing contest, among many other programs.

Homework Help

To further support children in their educational endeavors, BPL provides homework help and tutoring programs at several of our neighborhood libraries. Volunteers with the Library's After School Homework Helper program aid staff in giving homework assistance to students in grades 1-8. Students receive help with assignments in math, science, social studies and other topics; are instructed on how to use directories, indexes and other reference materials; and are encouraged to develop math skills through the use of web-based technology. Since 2004, approximately 500 people have volunteered in the After School Homework Helper program, assisting approximately 200,000 students.

Today's Teens, Tomorrow's Techies

For teenagers between the ages of 14 to 18 years old, BPL offers the award-winning Today's Teens, Tomorrow's Techies (T4) program. Volunteers enroll in a two-week summer technology institute, attend school-year workshops on a wide range of topics and assist librarians and other staff with computer troubleshooting and computer training workshops for the public. The program continues to grow in popularity and has engaged a total of 800 students in its seven

years of service. T4 offers young Brooklynites an invaluable opportunity to gain technical and interpersonal skills while volunteering in a real world setting.

Multicultural Internship Program

BPL also engages high school students in our Multicultural Internship Program (MIP). MIP recruits teens from diverse backgrounds who are interested in library careers to help develop cutting-edge programming and provide community outreach. Over the past three years, 170 interns have taken part in the program. Interns participate in workshops, field trips and forums during the program's first two months. For the following six months, interns are placed at local libraries where they commit to eight to ten hours per week of service. They are paired with other student "buddies" whenever possible, and with mentor librarians, and receive a \$1,500 stipend. MIP presents an engaging, innovative way to introduce students to the library profession and provide them with unique, behind-the-scenes, firsthand experiences at BPL.

Young Adult GED Preparation

For young adults ages 17 to 24 who are seeking work and preparing to take the GED, BPL provides the Back on Track literacy and job-readiness program. Back on Track offers free full-time pre-GED classes as well as a number of important resources, including literacy and math skills development, work readiness workshops, internship opportunities, social support services and transportation assistance. In FY 2011, approximately 160 young adults enrolled in the full-time pre-GED program. BPL also offers part-time pre-GED classes to adults who are 17 or older, and in the last Fiscal Year, we served approximately 400 people in our part-time pre-GED classes.

Conclusion

From The Child's Place for Children with Special Needs and the Kidsmobile, to T4 and the Back on Track program, BPL provides many important services for youth. There are currently more than 200,000 school-age children and teens with active BPL cards, but there are many more young people who could benefit from the wealth of resources the public library offers. The Library is pleased to collaborate with the department of education, New York Public Library, Queens Library, and various agencies to produce and distribute information and library card

applications. We would like as many young Brooklynites as possible to take advantage of our free programs and services.

Thank you again for providing BPL with the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES
AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

*INTRO 711 "A Local Law to amend the administrative code of
the city of New York, in relation to requiring various agencies to
distribute information on how to obtain a library card"*

**PRESENTED BY
ANDREW MILLER, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR
EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

**NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2011

Good morning Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. I am Andrew Miller, Assistant Commissioner for External Relations for the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). On behalf of DYCD Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the benefits of young people having a library card and to highlight our agency's strong partnerships with the City's three public library systems.

DYCD's core mission is to prepare young people for school, work and to become lifetime learners. We believe that young people can further their academic skills while in our programs and throughout their lifetimes, by becoming regular library visitors comfortable with accessing all services.

Literacy Services

As you may know, DYCD supports reading, writing, GED prep and English Language classes for young people and adults. We are delighted to partner with the Mayor's Center for Economic Opportunity and the libraries in supporting nine Young Adult Literacy programs, which work directly in library branches in high need areas. These include Mott Haven, West Farms and Bronx Library Center in the Bronx, Long Island City, Jamaica, South Jamaica and Far Rockaway in Queens, and New Lots and Macon in Brooklyn. This program provides intensive educational instruction to help disconnected youth ages 16 – 24 with low reading and math skills.

In announcing the expansion of the program last month, Mayor Bloomberg thanked Sony for the donation of 1,500 e-readers and the libraries, which will give participants the gift of enjoying free library books at the click of the button.

Our Literacy programs also work in identifying and referring those with the lowest literacy levels to specialized programs offered by the libraries.

Afterschool

Studies have demonstrated the success of afterschool services in improved academic outcomes for young people. DYCD's afterschool programs work collaboratively with our schools, and other community resources including libraries, to provide a mix of academic support, recreational activities and cultural experiences to complement what is learned during school hours. While all programs encourage young people to apply for a library card, there are a number of other examples of how programs work creatively to connect young people with our libraries. We'd like to share just a few:

- Youth from the Beacon Program located at P.S. 149 in Jackson Heights, are engaged in many civic engagement activities, including volunteering at the public library.

- Youth from the P.S. 198 Beacon in Upper Manhattan attend the West 96th Street Library weekly, where they receive homework assistance, borrow books, movies, and musical recordings, and participate in scheduled library activities.
- Youth from the Cornerstone Program from the Soundview Community Center in the Bronx regularly visit the library to participate in fun and academic library activities.
- Youth from the Cornerstone Program located in the Coney Island Houses in Brooklyn are engaged in educational interactive games that are structured and developed by Coney Island Library staff.
- And, the OST program at P.S. 18 in West Brighton, Staten Island, are planning trips to the Library during the upcoming school holiday break, to get library cards for participants, pick up books and participate in scheduled story time activities.

Workforce Development

DYCD's youth employment programs help young people gain workplace experience and further their education. These programs also work closely with the library systems to encourage young people to obtain a card and use library services.

- Out-of-School Youth (OSY) and Young Adult Internship Programs (YAIP) serve young adults who are not connected to school or work. They provide assistance in helping upgrade educational and occupational skills. Given the rich resources that the library has to offer to help enhance academic skills, and internet access to help with projects and obtain employment, participants are strongly encouraged to apply for a library card.
- The Summer Youth Employment Program provides summer employment opportunities to young people ages 14 – 24. Participants work 25 hours per week and work at a number of small businesses, summer camps, government agencies and libraries. This past summer, 129 youth worked at 44 branches providing key support in a number of areas such as customer service, reshelving, special programs and events. We also know libraries help young people without internet access to apply for SYEP online.

Other Partnerships

Our 43 Neighborhood Advisory Boards meet at least quarterly in the community in local meeting spaces, which are difficult to find. We are grateful to the libraries throughout the City, which offer space to bring in the community to discuss the use of Federal anti-poverty funding in our neighborhoods.

The three library systems are also members of the Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth Services (ICC), which Commissioner Mullgrav is the director. The

libraries have been active on the ICC's workgroups focused on supporting LGBTQ, and Court-Involved Youth and helping youth access resources and information.

Last year, the Brooklyn Public Library's Main Branch also hosted the ICC's Annual Public Hearing, where over 200 young people, representing a wide array of community-based organizations from around the City, attended. The libraries highlighted their use of technology in reaching out to young people and the vast resources offered to youth. This included homework assistance, summer reading programs and a host of additional web based services. Following the hearing, the young people were encouraged to use the facility and sign-up for a library card.

We were also pleased that the Brooklyn Public Library joined us for DYCD's first ever Youth Job Fair on Friday, November 18, 2011. They joined 30 other employers who had the opportunity to speak with 350 young people about employment opportunities within their organizations.

Finally, DYCD's Youth Connect works closely with the libraries in promoting upcoming activities to our thousands of Facebook and e-blast subscribers. DYCD's Youth Guide to Summer Fun - a broad citywide calendar of family-oriented events and resources - also features library events and activities.

Continuing to build on these efforts, we would be delighted to collaborate with the library systems to distribute materials developed and produced by them. This can be modeled similarly to how we provide voter registration forms. Given the libraries' knowledge of their specific systems, this would provide quality control of the materials, by ensuring that they are accurate and up-to-date. It also would decrease the burden to City agencies and community-based organizations, given the budget cuts sustained during the past several years. We simply would be hard-pressed to require our contract partners to be responsible for a new initiative.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to highlight our partnerships with the libraries. We would be delighted to answer your questions following the other agency testimony.



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

Testimony regarding Int. No. 711

November 30, 2011

Good morning, I am Tony Marx, President and CEO of The New York Public Library (NYPL). The NYPL system provides library services to the boroughs of the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island, as well as the research libraries for the entire City. Before I begin, I would like to thank Speaker Christine Quinn, Committee Chairmen Jimmy Van Bramer and Vincent Gentile and the members of the committee for your great support of libraries.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding Int. No. 711, which would require the Departments of Homeless Services and Youth and Community Development, as well as the Human Resources Administration and the Administration for Children's Services, to distribute information on obtaining a library card to all young people in our City. The NYPL supports this legislation and its goal of putting library cards in the hands of New York City's youngest residents.

A library card is a gateway to expanding a young person's knowledge and scope in understanding the world. It's also an entrance way towards independence, allowing our City's children and young adults to participate in a variety of programs and explore a vast collection of books, DVD's, CD's and online resources in a safe and welcoming environment. All free of charge. Access to books is essential to the development of reading and comprehension skills. Access to online tools that might not otherwise be available to families is critical. Access to the knowledgeable assistance of a

librarian is invaluable. Certainly a library card, which provides this access, is an essential tool in a child's education.

At the NYPL we work hard to enhance our collections and programming to make them accessible to children and families throughout our communities. We offer over 2 million items in our children and teen collections. Over the last 12 months, the NYPL hosted close to 30,000 programs for children and teens, with over 600,000 young people attending these programs; an increase in programs and attendance of 20% over the previous 12 month period. In FY11, 149,000 students visited an NYPL site with their classes and participated in over 5,600 school programs system-wide. The NYPL offers personalized programming spaces for our City's youngest citizens, with dedicated children's areas in each of our branch locations and five Teen Centers. These Teen Centers hosted close to 1,000 programs over the last 12 months; an over 20% increase. And, with outreach to schools, child care facilities and after-school programs, NYPL actively works with the community to engage this population.

Last year, in an effort to increase awareness of the services available to children and teens through our City's libraries, the Council passed Int. No. 59, which required the Department of Education (DOE) to distribute information on obtaining a library card to all of its students. NYPL supported this legislation and we were pleased to see its adoption. Since its enactment in August of 2010, over 26,000 children and young adults have obtained new library cards at the NYPL. In fact, over 22% (over 470,000) of the Library's active card holders are children and teens.

The NYPL is taking additional steps to get library cards into the hands of even more young people. In September, all three of the City's library systems teamed up on the "New Chapter" program, which gave children and teens across the five boroughs an opportunity to eliminate their

fines and fees and regain their library privileges. The initiative was a great success with over 240,554 previously blocked kids having their library card privileges restored. And, a new partnership between the NYPL and the Department of Education – “BiblioCommons” - is allowing teachers to borrow books online and have them delivered directly to the classroom. The pilot program currently includes 51 schools. Among its features, the program provides library cards to each of the 65,000 students in the pilot schools. Armed with library cards and even greater access to the NYPL’s entire catalogue, this essential partnership will make it easier for teachers and students to take advantage of the resources that the Library provides.

Access to information and educational resources is essential to the development of young minds. Thousands of our City’s young people are accessing the Library’s collections and programs but we know that there are many children who have yet to discover the possibilities that the library has to offer. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, in 2010, there were 1,765,829 young people under the age of 18 in our City. It is essential that each of them has a library card. As such, the NYPL fully supports Int. No. 711 which would require various City agencies to distribute information about how to obtain a library card to students and young persons under the age of 24. We look forward to working with this committee, the City Council and the relevant City agencies towards that end.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will remain available to answer any questions you might have.



City Council Hearing
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

“Intro 711: In relation to requiring various agencies to distribute information on how to obtain a library card.”

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

Good morning Chair Van Bramer and members of the Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee. I'm Carl Myricks, Program Administrator for the Family Services Division at the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). On behalf of Commissioner Seth Diamond, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning regarding the expansion of the library card legislation.

For those of you not familiar with our system, DHS is responsible for providing prevention and shelter services for families and individuals throughout the five boroughs. Every night the agency, together with our non-profit contractors, serve approximately 40,000 clients at over 200 shelters citywide. For the purposes of this legislation and the Committee's targeted demographic, in FY2011 just under 30,000 youth between the ages 0-23 entered DHS family shelters. In addition, DHS also provided shelter services to 3,517 single adults between the ages of 18-23 in the same time frame.

We currently operate 144 shelters for families with children, 59 shelters for single adults and 13 shelters for adult families (with no children under 21 years old). When families apply for services at our centralized intake center in the Bronx, they are met with a host City resources including representatives from the Human Resources Administration (HRA), Administration for Children and Family Services (ACS) and the Department of Education (DOE). Additionally, each of DHS' family shelters has an assigned Department of Education (DOE) family assistant worker and content expert who identify and support the educational needs of students while in shelter.

The Agency and contracted shelter staff routinely provide residency letters to assist any client, regardless of age, in obtaining a library card. We also make daily referrals to libraries for clients to become familiar with computers and the internet, to explore library classes, events and tours, to connect with homework help and afterschool fun and of course to aide parents in employment searches. As we do with other City and State agencies, we also welcome any library literature or posters from each of the library systems to be displayed in recreational or after school space at our shelters.

Homeless Services would like to work with the Committee on this legislation to build on the successes of its partnership with the DOE. While we have concerns about some aspects of the measure, including the additional cost associated with production and dissemination of material and our overall ability to reach all clients under 24 years old, we are very much open to further discussion with the Committee. DHS would like to preserve the intent of this measure and find ways to best connect homeless clients to the library systems without burdening our staff or our non-profit providers. To the best of our ability, DHS will make library information and applications available to the youth residing in our shelters. After all, public libraries offer a place for youth to learn and become inspired. We are happy to collaborate to increase awareness and help our youth discover the magic that libraries have to offer.

The New York City Administration for Children's Services
Dale Joseph, Assistant Commissioner,
Office of Community Partnerships and Advocacy, Division of Family Support Services
Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
November 30, 2011

“Int. No. 711 - In relation to requiring various agencies to distribute information on how to obtain a library card”

Good morning Chair Van Bramer, and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. I am Dale Joseph, Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Community Partnerships and Advocacy at the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). On behalf of ACS Commissioner Ronald Richter, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you regarding the New York City Council's legislation regarding distribution of library card access materials to children and youth served by ACS.

As you know, ACS serves children and youth in many different divisions and programs including child care, protective and preventive services, foster care, detention, and adoption subsidies. Through all of these different services, ACS reaches approximately 245,000 children and youth annually.

ACS places a premium on education and reading. From pre-school children in Child Care and Head Start, to children in foster care, and youth in detention, we have numerous programs aimed at promoting education as the key to the future for those we serve, and reading is a key part of that learning experience. I would like to share with you three examples of where we have worked with the public library systems to promote reading and learning.

Reading and Literacy in Detention Services

ACS' Division of Youth and Family Justice currently promotes reading and library use among youth in detention. As we have previously testified before this Committee, the Department of Education (DOE) through its Passages Academy, the City's three public library systems, and the non-profit Literacy for Incarcerated Teens (LIT) all support and promote reading and literacy for youth at Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brooklyn and Horizons Juvenile Center in the Bronx. This past winter, we collaborated with DOE to bring library services to our secure facility dormitories after school hours. Two DOE librarians visit the dorms so that one can check books in and out, while the other is visiting with youth and discussing books. Our librarians report a brisk business and our principal proudly reports seeing youth reading all around the building—even in the gym. We are pleased to note that DOE is currently remodeling the library at Horizons Juvenile Center and has received a \$250,000 grant to begin remodeling at Crossroads Juvenile Center.

We are also promoting the NYC Library system for our youth as we recognize what an important resource community libraries will be to our youth once they leave detention. This fall, we partnered with the library system to hold our first library fair for residents at our secure and non-secure facilities. The New York, Brooklyn, and Queens Public Library systems collaborated with programming staff to create workshops, provide books to residents, and inform them of all the services that the library provides. We are pleased to have been able to arrange it so that any accounts with outstanding balances that youth may have had prior to the fair were forgiven by the NYC library system. DYFJ staff created a NYC Library directory and each resident was issued library cards for all three branches. This effort will continue with all new residents being given the opportunity at intake to apply for all three library cards.

The Library System as An Educational Resource

In the past, ACS also has invited representatives of the public library systems to present at one of the monthly Education Forums for foster care agency education specialists and Child Protective Specialists within our Division of Child Protection. The *Education Matters* e-bulletin distributed following the forum, which has a wider audience than the event itself, included a summary of the presentation and any helpful links or attachments. We have also posted

information about supports available through the libraries on the banners we rotate on the Education Resources webpage of our internet website.

Efforts to Promote Literacy in Head Start

In September, our Head Start programs kicked off our “Dads Take Your Children To School” effort. Through this effort, we have targeted eight programs that were given packets of information and activities that they could use with their children to engage them in reading and other literacy activities, including library visits and library reading groups. At a recent Head Start conference, we presented a workshop on engaging fathers in children’s reading activities; all participants were given literacy packets provided by Scholastic Books. In addition, we are working with the Imagination Library to register families for their programs through our Child Care and Head Start Centers.

ACS supports the Council’s effort to provide young people served by our agency, as well as other city agencies, with information on accessing the three public library systems and obtaining a library card. We agree with the intent of the legislation and will make our best efforts to realize the goal of the legislation. We are, however, concerned about the potential costs and logistical difficulties of reaching all of the children our agency serves in order to provide this information.

The legislation requires that ACS develop either “written” or “electronic” materials for distribution. Given that the families that we serve often do not have internet access or e-mail addresses, it would be difficult to ensure that every child received information electronically.

With regards to written materials, it would cost ACS nearly \$800,000 to develop materials and mail information to every child that we serve in child care, protective and preventive services, foster care, detention, and those receiving adoption subsidies. Given the fiscal challenges that all city agencies have faced over the past several years, a mandate to produce and distribute these materials would mean a reduction in the services that we provide to those we serve and/or the elimination of staff positions.

Finally, we would like to add that the population of children that ACS serves is largely attending school through the Department of Education. Therefore, the requirement for ACS to distribute materials would be duplicative of the library information distributed to children in the schools.

We would gladly partner with the public library systems to distribute materials that they produce and print on how to access library services, and to post that information with links prominently on our website. ACS has successfully partnered with other City agencies to distribute and disseminate information that is helpful to those that we jointly serve, including public awareness campaigns where we have posted and been a point of distribution for materials in our offices and centers.

We would like to reiterate that ACS supports the intent of the City Council's legislation in this area. We believe in the importance of children reading at an early age, remaining engaged in reading throughout their childhood and adolescence, and having easy access to this City's public libraries. We will work with the Council to promote those goals and to find a workable means of ensuring children and youth receive information on how to capitalize on the resources available through our public library systems.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important topic.

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