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November 17, 2025

Dear Ramsey County Commissioners,

We write to you as the members of the Board of Directors of the Ramsey County Library Friends, a non-profit organization that has provided funding and support to Ramsey County Library since our founding in 1979. Our mission is to strengthen, support, and advocate for the Ramsey County Library system in order to enrich the lives of Library users, promote literacy and education, and foster community.

Ramsey County's proposed 2026-2027 biennial budget puts forward a budget reduction for the Library of approximately \$590,000, which accounts for just 0.06% of the County's budget. To manage this budget reduction, Ramsey County Library will need to reduce its staffing by almost five full-time equivalent positions.

This budget reduction will have a disproportionate impact on the County's residents. The Library's staff are their main asset and drive everything from book purchases to programming to personal assistance for residents. Fewer staff means fewer services. Below are examples of what this cut could look like to our community members:

- 125 fewer Library programs attended by 3,125 fewer people
- 124 fewer kindergarteners visited by librarians in their classrooms
- 150,000 fewer items checked out

And almost certainly, the community will have 364 fewer hours of access to open public space, due to the resulting planned closure of the Shoreview Library on Fridays.

Libraries are one of few public services that are universally used and trusted. Research has shown that around half of Americans engage with libraries annually, and **91% believe that libraries are important to their community.**

Why are libraries so beloved? They provide:

- Free books, movies, and other information resources
- Free climate-controlled space to sit, study, meet, read, or conduct personal business
- Free help with technology
- Free access to resources for essential needs such as jobs, food, housing, and energy

Libraries help residents learn to read, meet essential needs, be informed citizens, develop critical thinking skills, understand themselves and others, and find reprieve from the daily ups

and downs of life. Research by the Institute of Museum and Library Services found the presence and usage of public libraries in a community to be positively associated with multiple dimensions of social wellbeing, especially community health and school effectiveness.

We are grateful for everything you do for the County, and we recognize that you have tough decisions ahead of you. We value our partnership with you and are proud to work together to sustain Library funding and support our wonderful community.

As a library support organization, however, we are concerned to see library funding in our community moving backwards instead of forwards. Ramsey County Library is about to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026, but with fewer staff positions than it had in its 50<sup>th</sup> year. Ramsey County Library staffing levels per resident are lower than the Minnesota state average. While our County continues to grow and diversify, we are investing less in our Library system, a resource that serves all residents.

Current trends in our country make the Library even more important. Privatization of media means that it is harder for individuals to find reliable information and diverse viewpoints. Complex systems, such as healthcare, mean people need more guidance on navigating the systems. The increased use of technology to apply for jobs and access services means residents with less access to technology and fewer technology skills need more assistance to overcome technology barriers.

**We urge you to reconsider the cuts to the Ramsey County Library budget for 2026-2027.** For 0.06% of the County's budget, the Library could continue moving forwards instead of backwards. As your partners, we are committed to identifying more sources of supplementary funding for the Library. However, we cannot replace public funds.

Please help us preserve this vital community resource.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors  
Ramsey County Library Friends