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Date: September 27, 2021

To: Anchorage Assembly Members

From: Executive Council, Alaska Library Association (AkLA)

To the Anchorage Assembly, Greetings.

The Alaska Library Association is a nonprofit professional organization for the employees, volunteers and advocates at academic, public, school, and special libraries of all sizes in Alaska, as well as for vendors of library products and services. The goals of the organization are to promote vibrant libraries that deliver outstanding services to their users and to provide professional development opportunities.

We are writing to express our concerns to the Assembly regarding the appointment of an individual who does not meet the qualifications defined in the description to the position of Director of the Anchorage Public Library. We have written previously regarding another appointee. The position of the Alaska Library Association regarding the importance of a qualified Library Director remains unchanged.

The appointment of an individual who does not meet the qualifications defined in the position description is comparable to the appointment of a police or fire chief without any prior police or firefighting training or experience. Libraries are dynamic organizations which provide a variety of services to communities supporting early literacy, lifelong learning, career exploration, and job readiness. While some of the skills required to provide innovative leadership to an organization of this type may be transferable from a public school context, our association is concerned that a director without any prior experience working in libraries is not an appropriate choice to lead Alaska's largest public library system.

A Library Director must be a librarian, every bit as much as a school superintendent must be an educator. Just as there are unique issues and skills that would make an inexperienced educator inappropriate to be superintendent, likewise there are professional qualifications that one must have to be an effective Library Director. Good management skills and a love of learning and literacy do play a part. A library director also must understand issues of copyright, intellectual freedom, collection management, database construction, human-computer interaction, and professional standards of practice for departments from Children's programming to IT. Appointment of any individual who does not meet the listed qualifications of the post will negatively impact service delivery to your constituents.

The Executive Council of AkLA strongly encourages the Anchorage Assembly to follow a Civil Service process for this appointment. A national search and selection based on the approved job description and qualifications will ensure finding the professional skills, competencies, and experience that are

appropriate for a library of this size and importance, and will ensure that the Anchorage Public Library continues to provide excellent library service to the people of Anchorage.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our comment related to this appointment position and thank you for your service to your communities.

Best regards,

The Executive Council of the Alaska Library Association