March 23, 2020

The New England Library Association fully supports each state library association’s statements on COVID-19 as they relate to their state’s library institutions.

NELA continues to recommend the full closure of all public, academic, and school libraries until it is safe and advisable to reopen.

While many libraries have closed, the absence of an Executive Order places the burden of closure decisions on individual town, city, and county government officials. We continue to urge Governors in all six New England states to issue Executive Orders mandating the closure of libraries during this pandemic caused by COVID-19.

Further, NELA urges state officials to develop universal recommendations regarding curbside pickup and the staffing library buildings. Library managers are receiving conflicting information from local health boards regarding safe procedures for services. In the interests of protecting library staff and mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in our community, we encourage states to issue uniform recommendations regarding library operations during this uncertain time.

We urge our NELA members to join us in advocating for the safety of our library staff and communities. Please visit https://web.csg.org/covid19/executive-orders/ for updated information on state Executive Orders and https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials to find your elected officials.

The impact of this pandemic will be felt long after these shutdowns are over. We urge Congress to include at least $2 billion for libraries in COVID-19 economic relief legislation. This funding will help protect core services, provide additional digital content, fund deep cleanings of library buildings and collections, and other necessary services.

Stay safe and healthy, everyone.

NELA Administrative Committee