

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

As you craft the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2019, we urge you to fund the Educational Technology, Media, and Materials program at \$30.047 million. This funding provides over 530,000 students nationwide with visual and print disabilities free access to a library of books through the Bookshare project.

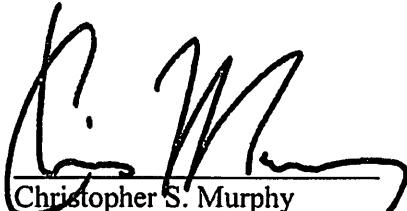
The Bookshare project specifically designed a technology that promotes better learning outcomes in students with visual and print disabilities. This technology provides texts online in audio, large print, and braille formats. Prior to 2006, just 5% of print materials worldwide were available to students with print disabilities. Thanks to this federal investment and the work of the disabilities community, the overwhelming majority of material students need for school is now available to them in a format that is accessible. Today, Bookshare's library has over 600,000 books and adds an additional 68,000 books a month. Bookshare was also able to achieve this dramatic growth at 1/15 the cost of other methods.

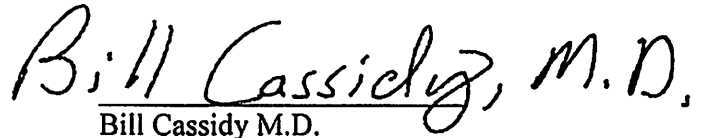
Bookshare is widely used in districts and homes across the country. Currently, 25,000 districts, including 99 of the largest 100 school districts, use Bookshare. Furthermore, students have used Bookshare to download over 12.5 million books, an average of 130,000 books per month. With current funding from the Department of Education Bookshare plans to expand the number of students served to 725,000 and grow the number of books offered to 800,000 by 2022. Funding from the Educational Technology, Media, and Materials program, provided by this committee, is integral to reaching that goal.

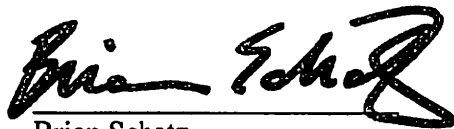
Your support for this program is vital to ensuring students with visual and print disabilities have access to educational materials that enable learning and academic growth. That is why we urge you to provide \$30.047 million in funding for this program in the FY2019 Labor, HHS Appropriations bill. In addition, as the committee has done in the past, we urge the Committee to include report language supporting expanding the reach of the program to more K-12 students in underserved areas.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

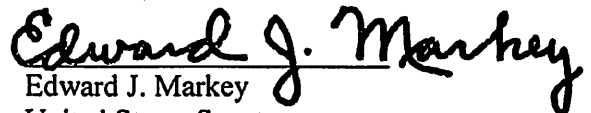

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

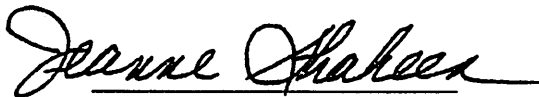

Bill Cassidy M.D.
United States Senator

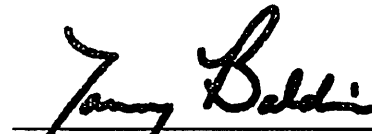

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

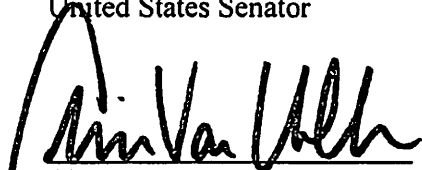

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

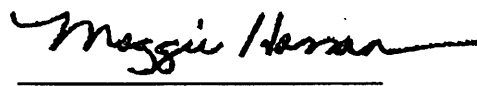

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Tommy Baldwin
United States Senator


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator


Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator


Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator