



March 17, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee,

In order to best protect Washington's library workers and their communities, the Washington Library Association (WLA) Board of Directors strongly urge you to move "libraries" from the *Allowed* to the *Not Allowed* category in the [Social Distancing infographic](#) shared on March 16, 2020 via social media. We commend the libraries and local officials who have already made the difficult decision to close their doors to the public. By having libraries on the Allowed list, it makes it that much harder for library leaders in advocating for closure of their buildings.

While we understand that each community is unique, we believe that by closing library buildings to the public and only reopening when guidance from public health officials indicates the risk from COVID-19 has significantly subsided is firmly in keeping with the other measures taken to curb the coronavirus outbreak.

Library buildings are, by design, not built for social distancing and disinfecting to the degree recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health authorities. Keeping library buildings open at this time has the potential to harm our communities far more than help. By closing our buildings and focusing on alternative forms of service, we believe that lives may be saved. In addition to all the online resources and downloadable materials available, closed libraries all over Washington are already providing innovative services such as curbside pickup of requested materials and online book groups. Our libraries will continue to find other ways to provide limited services to our communities that allow for the recommended distancing and disinfection that keeping public buildings open simply does not allow.

Additionally, and in alignment with the American Library Association's Allied Professional Association, we encourage libraries to ensure that all library workers receive paid leave, including health coverage, while libraries are closed.

This is a challenging time for everyone as we respond to novel coronavirus and the uncertainty surrounding it. We deeply appreciate how well the Governor's office has stayed on top of this quickly evolving and fluid situation. Keep well!

Sincerely,

[WLA Board of Directors](#)

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