



The People-Powered Voice for a Better Community

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May 23, 2022

Council President Darrell Clarke
Room 313
City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290

Dear Council President Clarke,

The Center City Residents Association recognizes the enormous value a neighborhood library brings to its community. Yet today in our great city of firsts, including the first free library, the entire library system is closed each Saturday and Sunday.

Across the state in Pittsburgh, all libraries are open 6 days a week and the Steel City's three flagship libraries are all open Sundays. Even Chester, the Commonwealth's poorest city, opens its libraries on Saturdays.

These weekend closures are a tragedy for the city and the many people who rely on our library system. Most of us in CCRA's catchment have resources and opportunities lacking elsewhere, but even here the library is heavily used by young and old as a place to enjoy books, educational programs, quiet reflection, community, and social engagement. Of paramount concern to CCRA is the effect of these closures in areas of high unemployment, poverty, and crime, where children lack internet access and safe places to learn after their school day ends.

The City's budget is \$5.6 billion dollars. We are told that just 0.5% of that budget (\$30 million) would keep all branches open 6 days a week. Presumably, it would cost significantly less to open libraries in our most troubled neighborhoods. The funds are there.¹

We ask that you restore the Philadelphia Free Library system to its rightful place as the cultural and educational center of the city's diverse neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Gross,
President

¹ The City has already received \$1.4 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funds but the proposed Kenney budget only allocates \$250 million in ARPA funds for the coming fiscal year.

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