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SEATTLE COMMUNITY COUNCIL FEDERATION

March 30, 2012

Seattle City Council
601 Fifth Avenue, Second floor
P. O. Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Proposed levy ordinance should hold harmless the existing funding of the Library, commit to increased hours and days of opening, and create a strong, independent, and geographically balanced oversight committee to ensure accountability

Dear City Councilmember:

Throughout our 66 year history, the Seattle Community Council Federation has strongly supported funding for the Seattle Public Library. As you know, Council Bill 117425 is a proposed ordinance that would place before the voters a 7-year property tax levy of about \$17 million/year.

SCCF has not yet taken a position on the proposed levy, but believes that improvements in the levy ordinance are needed to make it most deserving of assent from the voters. First, we suggest that C.B. 117425 be amended to commit the City Council not to cut the existing level of library support from the General Fund, and to increase the hours and days of the week in which the downtown library and the branch libraries are open. As currently written, the proposed levy ordinance would allow the City Council to completely displace with levy funds the current level of General Fund support now provided to the Library, and not to make any increase in the hours or days of the week of being open.

Without a City Council commitment to maintain General Fund support and to increase the hours and days of the week when the libraries are open, passage of the levy could leave the Library with no more funds than it has today, plus no assurance of continued funding when the levy runs out at the end of seven years. Consider that although the 1999 parks levy provided operating support, when the levy ran out that funding was not fully restored from the General Fund, leaving Department of Parks and Recreation funding in worse shape than before the levy was passed.