

Dear Members of the Oakland City Council,

Thank you again for placing Measure C on the Oakland ballot earlier this year, we were pleased to see that 82.3% of Oakland voters saw the continuing value of a vibrant Oakland Public Library and supported this measure. We write to you today regarding an important decision you can make to keep faith with these voters and ensure the measure delivers the intended impact.

As you may recall, the parcel tax comes with a “maintenance of effort” contribution from the City of Oakland’s General Fund that goes to support the baseline library services the City has historically funded before the parcel tax driven expansion in library hours and services. While the parcel tax itself is indexed for inflation, the maintenance of effort contribution is not indexed for inflation in the text of the ballot measure. We therefore ask you to amend the City of Oakland’s Consolidated Fiscal Policy to establish that an annual inflation adjustment to the Oakland Public Library’s maintenance of effort is an official Council budgeting policy. This is vital to prevent the maintenance of effort contribution from being eroded over time due to inflation. Such erosion could endanger library hours, result in lost positions, or even eventually lead to branch closures.

While not a legally binding commitment, writing an annual inflation adjustment into the City’s policy on how to craft the biannual budget will create an important expectation for future budget cycles. Future Councils will still have the flexibility to waive this proposed provision of the Consolidated Fiscal Policy in the event of a fiscal emergency, but in normal budgetary cycles we expect that this provision will help ensure that proper inflation adjustments are adhered to.

We thank the Councilmembers for their continued interest in the wellbeing and success of the Oakland Public Library, and we are glad to address any questions you may have regarding this proposal.

Best,

The Library Advisory Commission