

I write to you as a resident of the South End, which is now in year three of a library desert. I am sure you are aware of the closure of the South End branch in April 2021, and the plans in progress to build a new building.

I am reaching out to express the dire need for book services in the South End.

Speaking for myself, I am a solo parent who is car-free, and we are unable to obtain or return library books without a half-day plan for an alignment of public transit, good weather, and a small portable amount of books. We are a household of very fast readers. My daughter and I can both read 1-2 books a day. If we haul home a few books in a backpack, they're read in days.

My daughter attends the public Hurley dual-language K-8 school in the South End, a five minute walk from the South End branch. Almost 65% of the Hurley students come from low income families. Many live in public housing, notably in the Concord House development one block from the library, and an increasing number live in homeless shelters. Almost 42% of Hurley students are English-language learners, and many are recent immigrants.

The Hurley School has no library. The students are assigned 30 minutes of reading for homework a night, and many nights when my daughter has to read in Spanish she brings home books she has read multiple times that are far below her reading level. The Hurley simply does not have the resources to provide her with challenging and engaging reading materials. She devours books and is so eager for more.

I am aware that BPL has partnered with United South End Settlements for children's story hours, which is wonderful. I am imploring you to serve the rest of the population by bringing library books to the South End. I have seen other libraries use bookmobiles, come to weekend markets, or offer hold pick ups and drop boxes for returns. I have reached out to BPL neighborhood services and the BPL books by bike program and have been told there are no plans to offer any additional services in the coming years of the branch closure. I cannot accept that such a strong library system has no plans to serve a diverse community in need of books and materials.

I speak for many students, parents, and community members when I say we are waiting to hear how BPL plans to support the South End community until the new library is up and running.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Tessa Buckley