



**TESTIMONY OF PATRICIA A. TUMULTY  
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NJ ASSEMBLY LABOR COMMITTEE  
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Good morning I am Patricia Tumulty, the executive director of the New Jersey Library Association and I am speaking to you today about the role of our public libraries to assist job seekers and strengthen economic development.

The economic slowdown which is facing our state is causing severe hardships for thousands of our fellow residents. A sudden job loss is catastrophic. I can't provide the committee with suggestions on stimulus packages, but I can focus on ways our public libraries are assisting individuals who must face the challenge of a personal economic crisis through the loss of a job.

Many individuals have not been in the job market for many years and the skills they have acquired are not adequate for the challenges of the new economy. As the unemployment rate nears 6%, individuals and the families they support must find the answers to basic questions before they can begin to their personal journey to a secure economic future. The questions are: How do I find a new job in this economy? Are my technology skills adequate to compete with other workers? Should I explore a career change? Would I be able to make it as an entrepreneur?

To overcome a personal economic crisis and to prepare for the future, people need information resource and new skills as they focus on a new beginning. Finding a new job is a very personal passage. Many public libraries throughout New Jersey are offering important services to help people find success.

Let me give you some examples:

**INTERNET ACCESS**

Thousands cannot even begin the job search because they do not have a computer at home. Many employers in New Jersey from large employers such as Continental Airlines to the discount store Family Dollar require an online application. No paper applications are accepted. So if you don't have a computer or now can't afford computer access at home, you are automatically at a severe disadvantage in the job market. Fortunately every public library in New Jersey provides free Internet access to its patrons. In addition, many workers are finding they don't have the technology skills to compete

with other workers. This is another area where public libraries are assisting by offering free computer training courses in key areas such as word processing and spreadsheets.

### **RESUME DEVELOPMENT**

What if you haven't had to fill out a resume in many years? Where do you start? The Camden Public Library and the Trenton Public Library, for example, are providing assistance in resume preparation. Individuals can meet with a job coach who can help them organize and develop a resume.

### **JOB SEARCHING**

The search for a new job can be a difficult process. The Morris County Library has developed a series of career workshops to assist its residents. The titles of some of these programs are: *Local Resources for Job Seekers*; *Company Research Crash Course* (how to research your next employer); *Internet Job Search Tips*; and *the Target Job Search*. Giving people tools to assist them in finding that new job is critical to their success.

### **CAREER EXPLORATION**

During this economic slowdown, many people will explore new career options. Again we have some models of where libraries are assisting their residents. Many public libraries such as the Newark Public Library and the Paterson Public Library offer an online service called *Learning Express* which provides practice tests and tutorials for many standardized tests in areas such as law enforcement, health careers, cosmetology, and teacher preparation. This is an example of a resource that the library community wishes was available to all libraries on a statewide basis.

### **SMALL BUSINESS/ ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS**

Research has shown that the vast majority of new jobs in this economy will be created through the development of small businesses. But how do you begin? What tools do you need to be an entrepreneur?

Although many people have excellent ideas regarding the development of a new small business, they don't have the necessary tools to successfully implement their vision. A prime example of small business development is found at the Burlington County Library where its *Biz Gateway* provides a wide range of services in the areas of getting started with business, developing marketing plans, financing options and legal forms for small business. Cherry Hill Public Library offers businesses prime meeting space with multimedia offerings including video conferencing. These are certainly models which could be replicated state-wide.

Three years ago, the NJ State Library, through funding from the NJ State Legislature, began the *NJ Knowledge Initiative*, an innovative program to provide information resources to small businesses and entrepreneurs. Unfortunately the program received a million dollar cut in the FY08 state budget and was suspended temporarily until the enactment of the FY09 budget. . It is now being reestablished with an emphasis on providing small business resources statewide through the NJ State Library's information portal. One of the successes of this program is statewide access by every public library to

**RefUSA**, an online electronic resource which provides information on over 12 million companies. It has been very well received by the business community. It is the goal of the NJ State Library to provide other resources to the business community directly through this portal. The statewide funding model of NJKI has demonstrated that a small amount of state funding can be leveraged to provide benefits to everyone through a statewide shared system.

## **THE FUTURE**

The demand for job information and career development resources is going to escalate quickly in this state. Although the Department of Labor does have a system of approximately 40 One-Stop Career Centers throughout the state, many people do not have easy access to their services. Public libraries are community services located in most community neighborhoods. It would make tremendous sense for public libraries to have access to some of the electronic resources which the One Stop Centers provide so that more people can be served. Public libraries are the heart of their communities.

Our state's economic crisis has already had a direct impact on some of our public libraries. For example, tomorrow the Trenton City Council will discuss closing four branch libraries in the city leaving only the main library facility open. Significant decreases in library funding have also been discussed or have already been implemented in Jamesburg, Lambertville, Bloomingdale and others. The failure to exclude expenditures for municipal libraries from the 4% cap law is causing hardships for many communities. It is our goal to keep public libraries strong so they can assist in the state's economic recovery.

As this committee seeks to find resources to strengthen our state's economy, we offer New Jersey's public libraries as part of the solution. I have only provided you with a few examples of the services we can provide to assist our residents in making informed decisions about their future career opportunities and business development plans. These are the services which our residents need now. As New Jersey retools for the new economic challenges, our public libraries can provide the resources to empower individuals and stimulate small business for renewed economic growth.