Dear Mayor de Blasio and Members of the New York City Council:

We write on behalf of the 10,000 members of the Authors Guild, the nation’s largest and oldest society of professional authors. Approximately 2,000 of those members are New York City residents.

Millions of New Yorkers—and thousands of authors—rely on the city’s libraries for their books. These public libraries also provide essential community services like early literacy programs, English language classes, homework help, and job search resources. New York City libraries have cultivated generation after generation of writers and readers.

We are writing to support the budget requests of New York City’s three library systems. We were alarmed to learn that the proposed FY2020 budget cuts $10.4 million in operating funds from the libraries, which will undoubtedly lead to reduced hours of operation and imperil crucial services and programming. We ask that you consider the vital role that libraries play in our civic life before taking much-needed resources away from them.

We are living in an era of debased public discourse. Our libraries are our last, best fortress against the armies of ignorance and babble that threaten to overwhelm us on an hourly basis. Books nourish thoughtful, considered, and humane ways of discussing our lives as individuals and as citizens. Only writing and reading can provide access to the kind of sustained, longform thinking that can teach us to empathize and embrace ambiguity—our most potent antidote to the narrow-minded, short-sighted, and polarizing rhetoric inundating us. Providing all citizens with free access to literature and information resources has never been more important.

Our New York City libraries have served as a model for the rest of the world. Every New York City resident can walk into a library within blocks of their residence or workplace and access the internet, borrow books, and read. Every New York City child has access to programs that encourage an appreciation of books and helps them become readers. Every New York City writer (and indeed every writer from around the globe) has access to an incredible trove of research materials, author talks, and panel conversations. New York City libraries are crucial to creating new generations of readers and to keeping the readers we have engaged. Please do not take that away from the citizens of New York City. New York City would not be the “greatest city on Earth” without its treasured libraries.

Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation. —Walter Cronkite

On behalf of the Authors Guild and the undersigned authors,

Sincerely yours,

Mary Rasenberger, Executive Director
The Authors Guild