Greetings:

We are writing to ask your support in opposing agenda item 6120. The National federation of the Blind of California wishes to go on record encouraging the restoration of $15.2 million in combined funding for the California Library Services Act, the state literacy program, and the Public Library Foundation. This funding makes us eligible for federal matching grants which would also be lost if this funding is not restored. This item is of particular interest to us because the Sacramento Braille and Talking Book library is funded almost entirely by these federal grants, and the Braille Institute library in southern California is funded partly by them.

* The Sacramento Braille and Talking Book Library serve approximately 13,000 individuals and 550 institutions throughout Northern California. At present, the operating costs of this library are covered entirely by the federal matching grant.
  + The Los Angeles Braille Institute Library serves over 34,800 blind and visually impaired individuals in Southern California and mails out over 1,300,000units annually. This library receives over $2 million annually through the federal matching grants.
* These libraries offer books in Braille, in large print, and in audio format to consumers who often find it difficult to obtain accessible reading material. They are an invaluable resource to many blind consumers throughout California. We fear that the loss of these federal monies would have a deleterious effect on these services, resulting in the loss of library staff, increased time waiting for books, and a reduction in book selection.

Therefore, we ask that you recommend to the Senate Budget committee the restoration of $15.2 million in funding to the budget of the California State Libraries.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,