

Contact: Patricia Martinez-Gormley, Media Chair
Email: psgormleyesq@gmail.com
Telephone: 305-498-7941

For Immediate Release

COALITION TO SAVE OUR LIBRARIES
Because an Intelligent Community is Priceless

MIAMI – March 27, 2014 - A group of like-minded individuals and community organizations are proud to announce the creation of the Coalition to Save Our Libraries, dedicated to the protection, preservation, and enhancement of a priceless community resource, the Miami-Dade Public Library System (MDPLS).

Coalition members include volunteer and charitable organizations, city governments, and committed individuals from around the county:

- Time 2 Rally
- City of Pinecrest
- Library Advisory Board
- Sustainable Miami
- The Knight Foundation
- Friends of the Miami-Dade Public Library
- League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade County
- Community Advocates for Libraries in Miami (C.A.L.M.)

Despite being less than 1% of the County's total \$4 billion budget, the Miami-Dade Public Library System has been a target of detrimental budget cuts of 25% over the last four years. These cuts generated significant reductions in programs, services, and materials for the community, damaging a one-time award-winning system. In 2013-2014, when the opportunity arose to restore the millage rate supporting the libraries, County Mayor Carlos Gimenez refused to do so and the current budget crisis was further exacerbated.

On Wednesday, March 19, at his request, Mayor Gimenez was presented with two funding scenarios for MDPLS' 2014-2015 fiscal year: a \$30 million budget and a \$50 million budget.

It is the firm belief of this Coalition that both plans are inadequate as they call for radically reduced hours, staff, and services, akin to partial closures of library branches. Furthermore, based on the two plans provided, Mayor Gimenez did not follow through with his own Blue Ribbon Task Force's recommendation to "increase the millage to maintain and enhance library services." The work of the Task Force has been negated by the Mayor's actions.

MDPLS needs a minimum budget of \$64 million to provide this community the library system it deserves. This includes 8-hour days and at least 5 days of service across all branches, a collection that is current and expansive for all ages, and buildings that are well-staffed with professional librarians offering robust programs and services. Setting the Millage Rate to support \$64 million avoids unreasonable, unnecessary, and unwelcome cuts to all 49 branches.

In the coming weeks, this growing advocacy team will launch a major public education and promotion campaign. County residents will learn about the significant benefits of library services offered to everyone. An intelligent community is priceless; the true cost of losing our libraries is too much for our children and our county to pay.