

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio

Secretary of State

U.S. Department of State

2201 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write to urge immediate action regarding the status of dozens of nonprofit libraries across the United States that were recently informed they must cease accepting passport applications on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, effective February 13, 2026. In a time when demand for passports is surging, libraries are among the most accessible passport acceptance facilities, particularly for working families and rural residents. This abrupt determination, issued with little notice or explanation, has placed libraries, their employees, and the communities they serve in an untenable position through no fault of their own. We respectfully request an extension of the February 13 deadline through the remainder of the calendar year to prevent imminent harm and to allow libraries and communities the time needed to adapt.

In November 2025, libraries that have operated as passport acceptance facilities for years—often decades—were informed that, due to an oversight in the State Department mechanism, their 501(c)(3) nonprofit status rendered them ineligible under federal law. This revelation was devastating to institutions that had been repeatedly reviewed, certified, and reauthorized by the State Department in good standing. Across states such as Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, Connecticut, Georgia, and New Jersey, many public libraries are structured as nonprofit entities due to historical precedent, making this action especially disruptive.


The State Department has cited 22 U.S.C. 214(a)(1) and 22 C.F.R. 51.51(b) as the basis for this decision, yet it remains unclear how this interpretation of the provision went unenforced for decades or why the February 13 deadline cannot be adjusted given the gravity of the consequences. While we appreciate the prior extension from December 2025 to February 13, 2026, such a short window is insufficient for libraries to replace lost revenue, for staff to plan for their livelihoods, or for communities to establish alternative passport services. We thank the State Department for their assistance with and endorsement of pending legislation in the House (H.R. 6997) and Senate (S. 3733) to address this issue. But, as Congress moves forward on a legislative solution to this challenge, it is extremely unlikely such legislation will be passed in time to avert immediate damage.

For many communities across the country, libraries are the most accessible—and sometimes the only—passport acceptance facilities. Their loss will force residents to travel long distances, take unpaid time off work, or forgo access altogether, particularly as demand for passports surges due to Real ID requirements. In Perry County, Pennsylvania, for example, Marysville-Rye Library is one of only two passport acceptance facilities serving the entire county. It is also one of 18 libraries in PA so far that have been directed to cease all passport acceptance services effective February 13. This decision eliminates more than 80 percent of local passport appointment availability in Perry County, leaving the courthouse as the sole remaining option, with limited hours and


accessibility. In New York, Brooklyn Public Library has issued over 300,000 passports through its services alone over the last years; failure to extend this deadline will leave massive gaps in passport services.

Equally urgent is the human toll. Passport execution fees represent a substantial portion (up to 67%) of operating budgets for many libraries and directly support full-time staff salaries and health insurance. At some libraries, the February 13 deadline all but guarantees immediate staff reductions, putting dedicated public servants and their families at risk of losing their jobs, income, and healthcare overnight. Without an extension, libraries will be forced to lay off employees, cut essential programs for children and families, or close their doors entirely. Granting this extension would not resolve the issue permanently, but it would prevent irreversible harm while Congress and the State Department work toward a responsible, durable solution. We respectfully request a response to our request for an extension by February 10th, and a written justification for any rejection, given the circumstances at hand. Thank you for your leadership and your attention to this urgent matter.


Sincerely,



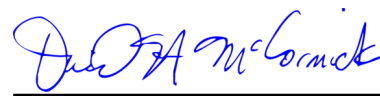
John Fetterman
United States Senator




Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator




Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



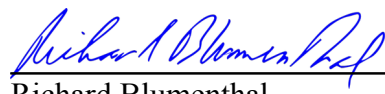
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