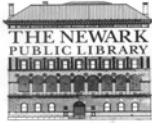


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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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For Immediate Release  
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**Concerned Newark Residents Speak Out Against  
Drastic Cuts to Library Services**

It may be summertime, but Makrisha Edwards, 14, has spent nearly every day at the Vailsburg branch of the Newark Public Library, reading books and conducting research for a summer school project. When Makrisha learned the Library would be forced to drastically reduce their services because of the city's budget crisis, she decided to take action.

On Wednesday, July 14, she brought her mother to the Vailsburg branch for a community meeting about cuts to library services. Approximately 50 neighborhood residents attended the meeting, which is one of four taking place.

The city, which provides 95 percent of the Library's funding, is slashing the Library's budget by \$2.45 million, a cut of 20 percent. The reduction will force the Library to permanently shut down the First Avenue and Madison branches, cancel children's activities, and cut the book budget. All branches—which are already closed on Saturdays—and the Main Library will also be forced to close on Mondays and Tuesdays, beginning August 16.

"My daughter Makrisha is here all the time," said Gayle Edwards. "It helps her with her homework. It also helps me—when my computer is down, I can come here."

Library Director Wilma Grey encouraged residents to let Newark Mayor Cory Booker and the municipal council know how important the library is to them.

"The cuts translate into \$2.45 million from our budget," Grey said. "When you consider that the proposed cuts for next year will be double, that will mean the demise of the Library."

According to Grey, libraries across the country are facing similar predicaments. Residents who advocate for their libraries can help local leaders establish libraries as a priority when funding is tight.

Michael A. Uhde, a lifelong Newark resident who uses the Vailsburg branch, said the Library is a city jewel that has supported generations of students. "One of the advantages that we had was the Newark Public Library," said Uhde.

Cass Gonmiah, who brings her children to the Vailsburg branch regularly, said the Library's closure on Saturdays has already made life harder for her and her five children. "The Library's hours were limited already," she said. "Saturdays were the only day people who work can come to the Library."

Dr. Gayle Griffin, a member of the Library's Board of Trustees who represents the Superintendent of Newark Public Schools, noted the Library is an important resource for people of all ages, whether it is an adult looking for a job or a student doing research for a project. "This is the library for all of us, no matter how young or how old," she said. "This is a place where you can always send your child. It upsets everyone because this resource is no longer available to our community."

Residents who want to voice their concerns should notify the mayor and the members of the municipal council. To send a letter of support to the Library, email [savethelibrary@npl.org](mailto:savethelibrary@npl.org). The next community meeting is scheduled for 6:00 pm on Wednesday, July 21, at the Van Buren Branch, 140 Van Buren Street.