

# Statement of the New Jersey Library Association Opposing the Privatization of the Vineland Public Library.

Good evening. I am Patricia Tumulty, Executive Director of the New Jersey Library Association. The New Jersey Library Association is the oldest and largest library organization in the state. We were established in 1890 to improve library services to all residents of New Jersey.

NJLA strongly opposes the privatization of the Vineland Public Library. This is not the first time this corporation has been in New Jersey. We opposed previous efforts by this corporation to privatize libraries in New Jersey before and we do so now.

Under New Jersey law, at one time the residents of Vineland voted at a public referendum to establish a municipal library in this community. With that vote, the community authorized that a board a trustees would operate the library for the community.

It has been written that the library will not be privatized because all services will still be free to the public. This is not what privatization means. Privatization is when a community relinquishes the day to day oversight and management of the library to a third party. That is exactly what is happening here. Once a contract with this corporation is signed the community role will only be to administrate a contract not to have dialogue with its residents. The person making the daily decisions regarding the operation of the library will be an employee of the corporation **NOT** an employee of the residents of their community.

How will policies of the board be administered? Conflicting interpretations in policies are bound to happen and who will be responsible for resolving those conflicts? The library director who answers to the corporation not to the board of trustees.

The same question can be asked about services and programs. Who will make those decisions? The corporation. When decisions are made at a corporate level the unique local character of this library will be lost.

Yes, there is a strong economic component to this attempt to privatize the library. It will be impossible to reach the amount of savings promised without cutting and eliminating salaries and benefits of the employees who work at the library. Most who have worked here for many years. This will have a direct impact on your community. Your residents will have less money to spend locally and your tax dollars will be spent by a corporation hundreds of miles away.

What will happen if you decide two years from now to end this contract? You have already jeopardized seniority and pension benefits to these employees. That is simply not fair.

There is also the question of transparency. Will residents be able to ask for records under OPRA from the corporation? Don't you have a right to know exactly where your tax dollars are going?

The library community of New Jersey strongly opposes this effort to remove community control of the Vineland Public Library. Yes, the Vineland Public Library must remain a free public library- with the residents of the community having control and oversight of the library. Privatization is not the answer.