



Mayor Robert E. Simison

**City Council Members:**

Brad Hoaglund  
Joe Borton  
Luke Cavener

John Overton  
Jessica Perreault  
Liz Strader

March 14, 2023

The Honorable Rod Beck, Chairman  
Ada County Board of Commissioners  
200 W. Front Street  
Boise, ID 83702

Dear Chairman Beck and Commissioners,

Libraries are an essential part of our community fabric. Our award-winning Meridian Library District (the District) provides a host of services to the community and to meet the demands for requested services, is in the midst of an expansion effort that was asked for and approved in 2019 by more than two-thirds of the ballots cast. This includes a new branch library that will open in the coming months.

The District has an elected board who set policy and direction for the patrons and they are responsible for those decisions and are held to account during elections. While we can all agree that we should live within the bounds of the laws and statutes in place, it is important to recognize that District board members are accountable to more than 58,000 registered voters. The fact that a little more than 100 people (less than two percent of those who actually voted last, and well less than one percent of registered voters in the District as of 2019) can file to request dissolution of such a valued and essential service to over 125,000 patrons is quite surprising and concerning. Given the fact that a petition to file for dissolution has such low barriers for consideration while recalls, a levy and other types of initiative elections have a much higher thresholds in Idaho State Code, the number of signees seems to be well below an acceptable level for consideration by the Ada County Board of Commissioners.

Nonetheless, concerns with any taxing district can and do arise. Specific to libraries, we will not all agree about content that exists in our public libraries, what we want to call or label it, nor how content should be accessed for books, videos, on websites through computers at the library, or in other forms. Having reasonable selection and access practices and policies set by the District for age-relevant material is important so that the District's collection reflects community standards and respects individual choice of parents and families. These types of policies and practices, along with pro-active parental control tools, are an appropriate minimum standard for the District to have in place, and we encourage the District to ensure their controls are in alignment with the expectations of the Meridian community.

While policies are important and necessary for the District, as parents it is our responsibility to

monitor our children and their access to information, whether it is in the library, school, online, television, and more. It is not the role of one parent to make content decisions for other parents. As a community, identifying and working within where we agree, rather than dividing our community with questions that will only consider select right or wrong answers, will enable us to have a more robust dialog and address concerns in a meaningful way.

While we strongly believe the community would vote overwhelmingly against any ballot question to dissolve the District, we do not believe that this petition is, in any way, a productive approach to any of the concerns that have been raised. For these reasons, we urge the Ada County Board of Commissioners to deny the request put forward by the Concerned Citizens of Meridian.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Simison  
Mayor



Brad Hoaglund  
City Council President



Luke Cavener  
Council Member



John Overton  
Council Member



Jessica Perreault  
Council Member



Liz Strader  
Council Member

cc: Bill Nary, Meridian City Attorney  
Steve Rutherford, Chief Operating Officer, Ada County Board of Commissioners

