Statement of Dr. Carla Hayden
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Before the
Committee on Rules and Administration
United States Senate

"Oversight of the Library of Congress"

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Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Fischer, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Library of Congress (Library) and its operations.

The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world with a collection of more than 175 million items that we preserve and make accessible in support of our mission to engage, inspire and inform the U.S. Congress, who is first and foremost among our users – and the people you represent, the American public. We appreciate the support and interest of this Committee as we continue our more than 220-year history as the steward of the national collection and a repository for our shared cultural heritage.

Each day, the Library serves its many users through a variety of programs, services, exhibits, and virtual offerings. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, the Library returned to normal operations for the visiting public, welcoming approximately 370,000 onsite visitors to our buildings. For those who could not visit in person, our robust and expanding online presence recorded over 151 million visits to the Library's websites and over 520 million page views.

Our core services include providing authoritative information to Congress and offering a wealth of knowledge to researchers. Each year, the Library responds to hundreds of thousands of reference requests from Congress, the public, and other federal agencies. In FY2022, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) published nearly 1,100 new products and responded to more than 73,000 congressional requests. We also inspire authors, musicians, and other creatives who engage with our collections, as well as ensure they can register their works for copyright

protection through the U.S. Copyright Office. The U.S. Copyright Office issued more than 484,000 copyright registrations in FY2022, a 16 percent increase over FY2021, while also bringing the average time to process a registration application down from 3.4 months to 2.7 months. These times have continued to decrease in FY2023, currently standing at about 2 months on average, and for fully electronic claims without correspondence, the average is 1.2 months. The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), as the principal provider of accessible reading materials for the blind and visually impaired population of the United States, circulated more than 22 million copies of braille, audio, and large-print material. Teachers from around the country received training about how to use the Library's primary resources, and the Library took 8.7 million preservation actions to ensure the longevity of resources across our collection.

The Library has also moved forward in substantial ways to enhance the ways we engage users both onsite and online to deepen their connection to the Library. Some examples include enhancing one of our most popular programs, the Veterans History Project, to make the stories of U.S. military veterans and their families more accessible online through a new modern website. The program now has more than 114,000 individual collections, spanning from World War I to recent conflicts. Our By the People volunteer transcription program increased its outreach footprint, supporting sixteen active campaigns and making 282,000 new images available for transcription. This program has been quite popular; public contributors helped complete 197,000 transcriptions in FY2022, bringing the lifetime total of the program to over 500,000 transcriptions.

Virtual programming and live-streaming at Library signature events like the National Book Festival have meant that we can reach more people in their homes even as we return to hosting large-scale in-person events. The most recent book festival in 2022 was the most geographically diverse in-person festival the Library has held to date, but festival-goers did not have to come to Washington, D.C. to participate. We learned from our experience of adapting the event to a hybrid model during the pandemic, and were able to continue offering online content now that we are fully back in person.

Our buildings are once again buzzing with researchers, visitors, school groups, and tourists. Onsite events have returned since the pandemic at a robust level, with a 75 percent increase in events

since FY2021. We even introduced a new public event series last year, Live! at the Library, which extends our public hours on Thursday evenings from 5:00 to 8:00 pm. These events provide a new opportunity for people to visit our exhibits and participate in live programming and workshops. I am excited about opportunities like this to open up our treasure chest as well as the many opportunities that lie ahead to make our physical spaces more engaging for Members of Congress and your constituents who visit Capitol Hill.

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

In partnership with the Library's authorization and appropriations committees of jurisdiction and the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), the Library is creating an all new visitor experience that will invite visitors to discover more of our treasures, programs, and services. The Visitor Experience Master Plan (VEMP) was approved by Congress in 2019. The physical components of the plan include an Orientation Gallery that will feature our restoration of Thomas Jefferson's Library, a Youth Learning Center where young learners and families can interact with our collections, and a Treasures Gallery to display the wonder, scope and history contained within our special collections.

At the heart of the VEMP is a commitment to preserve and celebrate the historic elements of the Thomas Jefferson Building, while repurposing non-historic back-of-house employee workspace for the new Orientation Gallery and renovating other non-historic public areas into a space dedicated for children. The new Treasures Gallery will be installed within existing exhibit space and has been designed to provide visitors with a greater appreciation for the historic space the exhibit will occupy. In addition to our goal of providing opportunities that can be enjoyed by a multitude of audiences, these improvements will not impact the historic Great Hall, Main Reading Room, nor the Library's support of onsite research.

The Library remains committed to ensuring the VEMP is implemented for the America250 celebrations in 2026. We are on or under budget in nearly all Library specific components and in some instances have had to make the difficult decision to simplify design elements to ensure a judicious project schedule. While the timeline and significant AOC construction budget increases recently identified by the AOC are impacted by a number of factors, to include general construction

escalation costs, the Committee's direct involvement and unwavering support of the project, and that of the Acting Architect of the Capitol, will continue to ensure critical milestones are reached and we are able to open these amazing offerings to the public for the U.S. Semiquincentennial anniversary.

Strategic Planning and the Path Ahead

As the Library looks ahead with an eye toward maintaining a high level of service for its many user groups, we are guided by the continuous effort of agency-wide strategic planning. The current plan, "Enriching the Library Experience," was released in 2019 and is now in its fifth and final year. It puts Library users – Congress, Creators, Connectors, and Learners – at the heart of all we do. Along with the Library's Digital Strategy, this strategic plan has guided us to enrich user experiences with all parts of the Library, and I am proud of the extraordinary progress we have made in service to our goals, despite the substantial upheaval of the pandemic. Such progress includes increasing access to digital content and records across the agency, achieving major modernization efforts for the agency as a whole and within key service units, and making progress on the VEMP.

Our approach to developing the Library's next strategic plan for FY2024 – FY2028 leverages the success of our previous work, engaging external stakeholders and a core group of 45 leaders and staff throughout the Library to create a plan that will continue to emphasize themes that unify Library service units, while also supporting their discrete missions. The Library's digital transformation is one particular theme that has carried across every part of the agency. We launched a Digital Strategy in 2019 to complement the strategic plan. Driven by the strategic plan, the Digital Strategy described what the Library should look like, in terms of its digital transformation over the next five years, including initiatives that were already in process. Importantly, the new Strategic plan will integrate the Library's digital strategy and strategic plan into one document. This is a reflection of both the progress made and the continued focus on digital transformation across the agency.

Digital Transformation and Information Technology (IT) Modernization

The Library has made significant progress in modernizing its enterprise technology, which serves as the foundation for all digital transformation work completed in recent years and currently underway. The Library has fundamentally rebuilt its IT infrastructure and technology management practices since the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued its report on the agency's information technology in 2015. Working with GAO, the Library has addressed 98 percent of all public and non-public recommendations, leaving only two that are not yet considered "closed as implemented" as they require multi-year solutions. Thanks to the investments of Congress and the support of this Committee, we are now a more digitally-enabled organization, which is critical to our ability to keep up with the demands of Congress and the expectations of a modern library.

Major modernization initiatives are underway in several key Library service units where great progress is being made. We are developing a new Library Collections Access Platform (LCAP) to replace legacy library management systems and modernize the core operations that provide access to the Library's collections. In CRS, we are working jointly to develop the Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS), which will replace the current system used to author reports and provide service to Congress. We expect the initial components of this system to launch late this calendar year.

In NLS, we have launched BARD 2.0 – a major upgrade of the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) system our patrons use to download NLS content. The new cloud-based system provides a much simpler user interface and can support more than five times as many patrons. The new braille e-reader project also continues to be successful. What started as a pilot has now expanded to 42 states with over 7,000 devices distributed.

The Library is working jointly with the U.S. Copyright Office to build an integrated, modernized technology system that is efficient and more intuitive for the public to use. I am pleased to report that new critical systems within the Enterprise Copyright System are live, being used by the public, and receiving positive feedback. Beginning in 2020, we launched a new Copyright Public Records System, which allows users to efficiently search for copyright registration data and records. In 2022, we released the first-ever electronic copyright Recordation system, which replaces a legacy

paper-based system used to record documents related to copyright ownership. The Library and the U.S. Copyright Office are now focusing on building a next-generation Registration system to replace the largest legacy system in the U.S. Copyright Office, known as eCO. The new Registration system will greatly improve the user experience as well as streamline the application process.

As an agency powered by technology, the Library has taken an important lesson from the private sector by adopting a "continuous development" approach for maintaining major IT systems once they are developed. In practical terms, this means IT professionals are always working to improve each system, from its inception, to prevent technology from falling behind or becoming out of date. In contrast to many of our legacy systems, new systems will be assessed and improved at regular intervals with new features added as needed. A prime example is Congress.gov, which is currently in continuous development and updated every three weeks with a steady stream of new features based on user feedback.   We also recently launched a highly anticipated public Application Programming Interface (API), making legislative data more accessible, reliable, and now machine readable. Our goal is to implement the continuous development approach across all of our major IT systems and that work is underway.

The Library is also remaining vigilant against cybersecurity threats. We take our responsibility to ensure Library systems are secure as a national priority, which requires that we strive to maintain and consistently mature a comprehensive suite of cybersecurity tools to stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated threats. Ensuring our IT security posture would not be possible without investments received from Congress and the collaboration of our Legislative Branch partners. Actions taken in recent years to maintain and increase a strong cybersecurity posture include centralizing IT security protections; increasing resources to ensure the continuity of mission-critical technology; and implementing National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) security standards, including the latest and strongest catalog of NIST IT security controls in 2022. In addition, the Library regularly participates in the Legislative Branch Cybersecurity Working Group, composed of representatives from all Legislative Branch agencies and staff representatives from the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. It is a vital resource for cybersecurity on Capitol

Hill that does great work to coordinate responses to security threats and facilitate the inter-agency exchange of expertise.

Legislative Initiatives

Lastly, but importantly, the Library is requesting several changes in our legislative authorities this year that will help us enhance our service to Congress, improve our operations, and continue to meet our mission. This includes language to strengthen our workforce by improving our recruitment tools and allowing the lending of detail employees between the Library and other federal agencies; language to make our transfer authority process more efficient; and language to expand our National Film and Sound Recording Boards to increase the representational expertise of those boards. We also seek to create a new program that will allow the Library to partner with minority-serving institutions and their students to develop future talent in the library and archive fields as well as serve the Library's mission by helping to expand our collection and promote broader access. I look forward to working with the Committee on moving these important initiatives forward this year and urge their consideration.

Conclusion

The Library continues to execute its strategic plan by enhancing our services to users, increasing access to our buildings and collections, and modernizing to become more digitally enabled. We are excited about the progress that has been made, the work that remains to be done, and the promise of the future enabled by these efforts.

As always, the Library remains committed to providing excellent service to Congress as your Library. I thank you again for your continued interest and support for the Library of Congress, and for providing an opportunity to update the Committee on these important topics.