Dear (add your greeting here),

I am writing to ask for your support on an issue that would provide a greater level of security for authors and writers like myself - many of whom are freelance and have been struggling over the past year, despite continuously contributing to our nation’s cultural richness - by urging an increase to the funding for Public Lending Right (PLR), instead of maintaining it at its current level.

PLR is a simple and effective way in which the Government can support UK writers fairly, as our creative sector seeks to recover. It is a system based on library use of books and remunerates the author for the free loan of their work up to a current maximum of £6,600. It ensures that funds reach a wide range of authors, beyond top-sellers, which is crucial to encourage diversity in writing.

Writers are central to the success of all our creative industries, yet even before the current crisis research conducted by the Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) had shown that authors’ incomes fell 42% in real terms from 2005 to 2018.

The pandemic exacerbated this, with surveys by the Society of Authors’ showing that 57% of us have seen incomes decline since COVID-19 began. Whilst I appreciated the Government’s efforts to support the sector with the Cultural Recovery Fund, this mostly benefitted institutions and venues, rather than individual freelance creators who make up most of the writing community.

Increasing funding for PLR would be an opportunity to alleviate the issues I have raised and ensure that writing as a profession encourages a wide a range of contributions from as diverse a range of writers as possible. Without greater levels of financial security, we risk losing creative talent as authors such as myself will simply no longer be able to sustain a career.

As it is, the size of the PLR fund is relatively small and has not increased for many years. While the fund here in the UK pays authors a share of approximately £6 million a year, writers in France and Germany receive £13 million and £14 million a year from their respective PLR organisations. In Finland, indeed, which has barely a tenth of the UK’s population, their fund stands at £8 million.

The rate per book loan is currently 9.55p, a small percentage of the cover price – and every loan is, of course, a potential missed sale. And, as it stands, of 21,000 benefitting last year, over 15,000 received under £100, so a rise in funding would allow more meaningful payments to so many.

Public libraries are particularly important to less affluent areas, of course, and to local authors in those communities. As well as being a targeted source of support for writers, therefore, an increase in PLR would also fit well with the Government’s wider ‘levelling up’ agenda across the UK.

I hope this will encourage you to voice your support and urge the Treasury to increase the PLR fund in the forthcoming Spending Review. This can be done at modest cost and would demonstrate the value the Government places in difficult times on writers like myself, who contribute to the public good and want to be able to make a living from our work to carry on creating.

If you would forward my letter, as a constituent, to the new Secretary of State for DCMS, asking her to make representations to the Chancellor about PLR on our behalf, I would be very grateful.

Many thanks and yours sincerely

(Your name)