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**Urban Librarians Unite and the REFORMA Children in Crisis Task Force Awarded \$95,412 for New Books by Nonprofit First Book**

**BROOKLYN, NY** (July 29, 2019) – Urban Librarians Unite and the REFORMA Children in Crisis Task Force have been selected from among over 100 applications to receive an award of \$95,412 for new books that will expand their mission. First Book, the nonprofit social enterprise focused on equal access to quality education for children in need, awarded the funds as part of its OMG Books Awards: Offering More Great Books to Spark Innovation, a program that will give more than \$4.7 million in funding to distribute 1.5 million brand new books and eBooks to children living in low-income communities in 33 U.S. states and territories.

The REFORMA Children in Crisis Task Force and Urban Librarians Unite will use the award to provide books to children in foster care and secure facilities as well as attorney’s offices, support agencies, and directly into the hands of kids as they are being moved from place to place around the country. This is a way to give kids in difficult circumstances education, entertainment, and hope. Not only will librarians and trained educators create collections for the kids to access but groups that have been helping these children will be given resources to get materials for the kids they serve.

REFORMA’s Oralia Garza de Cortes noted that “REFORMA has been delivering books since 2014 to the Children in Crisis, but with this generous award we will be able to more effectively address the ever expanding needs of the children and those individuals and agencies who care for them. Many of these children are lacking the most basic needs and they treasure being able to carry a book with them as they travel through the immigration process. We look forward, through the collaboration with Urban Librarians Unite and First Book, to bring joy to as many of these children as possible during this humanitarian crisis.”



“This award will allow us to provide books to thousands of kids across the country. These children have very little to call their own and are living in high stress conditions. These materials will go a little way to helping them feel like they belong and distract them from the difficult circumstances they are in. This will send a signal that there are people in America that care and show it in a way that they can carry with them until they finally settle into new homes,” says Christian Zabriskie Executive Director of Urban Librarians Unite.

Awardees are using the funding to select books and eBooks from the First Book Marketplace ([www.fbmarketplace.com](http://www.fbmarketplace.com)), First Book’s award-winning eCommerce platform, that best meet the needs of the children they serve. First Book estimates the total value of the books distributed through the total OMG Books Awards will be more than \$12 million.

“We know that access to books and eBooks makes a significant difference in a child’s future success,” said Kyle Zimmer, First Book president, CEO, and cofounder. “Children do not thrive in deeply under-resourced environments and too many schools and programs have far too little. This deprivation has long-term consequences for the children, their families, their communities and our nation. This could not be more urgent. With the OMG Books Awards, First Book and Urban Librarians Unite and the REFORMA Children in Crisis Task Force are investing not only in the future of the kids we’re reaching, but in the overall well-being of our nation.”

Members of the First Book Network, who exclusively serve kids in need, have indicated that without First Book, the children they serve would have access to very few books, if any at all.<sup>1</sup> (Reference below).

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### **About Urban Librarians Unite**

Urban Librarians Unite is a professional organization focusing on advocacy and education for front line working librarians in large urban centers. ULU runs an annual conference for urban librarians, offers training, hosts meetups, and works to support library professionals in urban centers. ULU has been working closely with two agencies in Westchester to provide reading materials directly to kids who either came into the country without their parents or were separated from them. They are vocal advocates for these children in difficult circumstances and feel that books can be a way of helping them to find joy and solace until their lives settle.

### **About REFORMA Children in Crisis Task Force**

REFORMA's CIC Project has been actively working to provide access to library and literacy services for Spanish-speaking minors and immigrant families being held in detention centers across the United States since 2014. The [Children in Crisis Project](#) was created to solicit donations, and to purchase and deliver books for children in detention centers, shelters, law

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<sup>1</sup> First Book Member Survey, 2016



offices, and group homes around the country where these children are sent after being processed. This work is carried out through the local chapters of REFORMA in partnership with various social service agencies.

Established in 1971, REFORMA has actively sought to promote the development of library collections to include Spanish-language and Latino-oriented materials; the recruitment of more bilingual and bicultural library professionals and support staff; the development of library services and programs that meet the needs of the Latino community; the establishment of a national information and support network among individuals who share our goals; the education of the U.S. Latino population with regard to the availability and types of library services; and lobbying efforts to preserve existing library resource centers serving the interests of Latinos. For more information on REFORMA, visit [reforma.org](http://reforma.org).

### **About First Book**

First Book believes education offers children in need the best path out of poverty. Through sustainable, market-driven models, First Book breaks down barriers to quality education by making new, high-quality books and educational resources, including sports equipment, winter coats, snacks, and more, affordable to its member network of more than 425,000 registered educators who exclusively serve kids in need. Since 1992, First Book has distributed more learning materials than any other program of its kind: 185 million books and educational resources, worth more than \$1.5 billion, reaching millions of children annually across the U.S. and Canada.

First Book also expands the breadth and depth of the education field through a family of social enterprises, including First Book Research & Insights, its proprietary research initiative, and the First Book Accelerator, which brings best-in-class research to the classroom via relevant, usable educator resources.

Eligible educators, librarians, providers, and others serving children in need can sign up at [firstbook.org/join](http://firstbook.org/join). For more information, please visit [firstbook.org](http://firstbook.org) or follow the latest news on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).