

2022 -- H 7916

LC004920

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

A N A C T

RELATING TO LIBRARIES - STATE AID TO LIBRARIES

Introduced By: Representatives Morales, Cortvriend, Speakman, Carson, Vella-Wilkinson, Slater, Baginski, Donovan, Kennedy, and Amore

Date Introduced: March 07, 2022

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 29-6-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 29-6 entitled "State Aid to
2 Libraries" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **29-6-2. Public library services.**

4 (a) The general assembly makes the following findings:

5 (1) The Constitution of the State of Rhode Island Article XII of Education, Section 1 states
6 that it "shall be the duty of the general assembly to promote public schools and public libraries, and
7 to adopt all means which it may deem necessary and proper to secure to the people the advantages
8 and opportunities of education and public library services."

9 (2) Free public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a
10 democracy;

11 (3) Free public libraries provide for the cultural, educational, informational, and research
12 needs of all citizens;

13 (4) Free public libraries are an integral part of the educational system at all levels and a
14 source for vocational information and continued learning following the period of formal education;

15 (5) It is the responsibility of government at all levels to provide adequate financial support
16 for all free public libraries;

17 (6) Throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, public libraries across Rhode Island
18 have adopted creative strategies to support their communities through daily virtual programming,
19 free audiobook subscriptions, takeaway activity bags for youth, curbside book pick-ups, printing

1 services, and limited indoor browsing; and

2 (7) The State of Rhode Island has not funded state aid to libraries at the twenty-five percent
3 (25%) level prescribed in RIGL § 29-6-2 since fiscal year 2009.

4 (b) For each city or town, the state's share to support local public library services shall be
5 equal to at least twenty-five percent (25%) of both the amount appropriated and expended in the
6 second preceding fiscal year by the city or town from local tax revenues and funds from the public
7 library's private endowment that supplement the municipal appropriation; provided, however, the
8 state in any year shall not be obligated to match any amount from the endowment that exceeds six
9 percent (6%) of the three-year (3) average market value, calculated at the end of the calendar year,
10 of the investments in the endowment. The amount of the grant payable to each municipality in any
11 year in accordance with this section shall be reduced proportionately in the event that the total of
12 those grants in any year exceeds the amount appropriated that year for the purposes of this section.

13 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, in fiscal year 2023, the
14 state shall pay each city and town a fixed twenty-five percent (25%) of the amount appropriated
15 and expended by the city or town in the second preceding fiscal year from local tax revenues and
16 from the public library's private endowment that supplement the municipal appropriation for public
17 library services. The state may supplement funds from the American Rescue Plan Act State Fiscal
18 Recovery Funds.

19 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
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1 This act would require that the state's share to support public library services in fiscal year
2 2023 be fixed at twenty-five percent (25%) of the amount appropriated and expended by the city
3 or town in the second preceding fiscal year, utilizing funds from the general fund supplemented by
4 the American Rescue Plan Act State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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