

The Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB)



Building a stronger Commonwealth: **one person at a time**



Founded in 2000, **Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB)** is the Commonwealth affiliate of the Library of Congress. Chartered as the 38th center for the book in a network that now sees centers in every state and territory in the country, MCB is charged with developing, supporting, and promoting cultural programming to advance the cause of books, libraries, and reading. Each center is funded by its home state, commonwealth, district, or territory. Line item 7000-9508 was established in 2014 to fund MCB operating expenses.

Massachusetts Center for the Book collaborates with libraries on programming that will have statewide impact; operates youth and family literacy programs; represents the Commonwealth at the National Book Festival and in Library of Congress initiatives; and partners with community organizations on literary events, big and small.

MCB's core programs reach thousands of adults and young people across Massachusetts each year. The annual Massachusetts Book Awards—one of the strongest state book awards programs in the nation—recognized over 60 Massachusetts-based writers and illustrators with honors and awards in 2023. Public programs organized in cooperation with the Boston Book Festival, Mass Poetry, and the Emily Dickinson Museum featured Massachusetts writers and celebrated the literary heritage of the Commonwealth. The writing initiative, Letters About Literature, has seen participation from tens of thousands of 4th- through 12th-grade students across the Commonwealth since its inception.

Initiatives launched in 2023 reached new communities of readers:

- MCB collaborated with Gateway City public libraries in Attleboro, Chelsea, Chicopee, Holyoke, Methuen, Peabody, Pittsfield, and Salem to pilot a family literacy initiative, "Gateways to Reading," which strengthens reading capacity and the bonds between parents and children, while equipping libraries with the tools they need to better serve patrons.
- Over 2500 readers across 275 Massachusetts cities and towns participated in MCB's 2023 Reading Challenge. This new program was launched in partnership with more than 100 public and school libraries and bookstores across the Commonwealth, and encourages adults and students to read all year long.

Proposed Funding Increase Will Support New Programs and Initiatives for Families, Children and Youth

The MBLC's proposed increase in funding for the Massachusetts Center for the Book (Line Item 7000-9508) will support the development and deployment of new statewide programs to bolster lifelong literacy, family learning, and increased access to literary programming for children and youth.

Expanded Family Literacy Program in Gateway Cities

Building off the momentum of the Gateways to Reading program (developed in collaboration with eight Gateway City public libraries with IMLS American Rescue Plan funds from the MBLC), Massachusetts Center for the Book seeks to expand and make permanent their family literacy initiative, which will serve all twenty-six Gateway Libraries in Massachusetts. Access to family literacy programming is particularly crucial in communities with high numbers of ESOL families—when parents' reading capacities are strengthened, they are better able to support children's learning. In turn, children's early exposure to reading and language in the household leads to better academic outcomes and reading successes later on.



Launch of a Statewide Book Festival for Children and Youth

Recognizing that young people's access to literary programming is inequitably distributed across Massachusetts (especially for those living in rural areas and Gateway Cities) and how transformational author events can be, MCB seeks to launch a new, statewide children's book festival that will engage young readers across the divides of geography and socioeconomic status. As rates of pleasure reading among children and teens continue to drop, reaching their lowest levels since at least the 1980s, it has become necessary to thoughtfully and deliberately invest in programming that will help turn the tide and create excitement around reading.