



## BUILDING A STRONGER COMMONWEALTH: **one person at a time**

The Commonwealth's libraries connect people to each other, to opportunities, and to personal growth so we're working to ensure that everyone feels welcome and we're listening to what people need. 85% of public libraries are now [fine free](#). Partnerships and collaborations are leading to innovative programming like [Access to Justice](#). Libraries are safe spaces where people can be who they are, explore interests and hobbies, and connect to other support services in the community.

### Library Legislation – Librarians are defending our right to read

According to the [American Library Association](#) (ALA), there were 45 book challenges in Massachusetts in 2022 affecting 57 titles. That's more than the past 9 years (2013-2021) combined which totaled 38 challenges. In 2023, attempts to ban books in the Commonwealth continued with more than 2,000 complaints and informal challenges and 38 formal challenges in public libraries. [Bills S2528](#) and [H4229](#) will help ensure diverse voices stay in our collections and give everyone the opportunity to learn from different perspectives.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9508** [Massachusetts Center for the Book](#). While other states are banning books like *Flamer* by Mike Curato and *A Scatter of Light* by Malinda Lo, these titles are [recipients of awards from Massachusetts Center for the Book](#) and are featured along with their "Must Read" titles promoted through libraries.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9101** [Board of Library Commissioners'](#) staff support libraries facing book challenges and work with them to develop policies that protect collections and staff.

### Broadband access is just the start of digital equity

20% of respondents to a recent [Massachusetts Broadband Institute](#) survey said they don't have broadband at home; 21% said they don't have a laptop or desktop at home.\* Over 1 in 3 respondents reported having at least some difficulty paying for their internet.\*\* Thousands of people access the internet through libraries every day and libraries lend laptops and WI-FI hotspots. Librarians also teach people how to use technology. From helping someone get their first email address, apply for a job online, navigate government forms, access telehealth and more, librarians ensure that no one is left behind in the digital world.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9501** [State Aid to Public Libraries](#) is local aid for libraries. Libraries often use State Aid funding to upgrade computers or purchase new technology.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9101** [Board of Library Commissioners'](#) staff educate librarians on the application process and the benefits of federal E-rate funds to improve and expand library connectivity.

## Library Legislation – Publisher practices restrict eBook access

Publishers often charge libraries triple what a consumer pays for the same eBook with more restrictive licenses. Networks have [doubled what they spend](#) on eBooks and yet residents may face wait times as long as six months. Libraries simply can't afford to keep pace with demand. The Massachusetts Library Association is working with Representative Ruth Balsler on [Bill H.3239](#) which leans on the Commonwealth's strong consumer protection law to require publishers use fair practices when doing business with libraries. For many people, eBooks and audiobooks aren't just a preference, they're a necessity. Students with dyslexia depend on audiobooks. For people with disabilities, eBooks keep them reading. For those with mobility issues or who are homebound, eContent keeps them connected to the world around them.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9501** [State Aid to Public Libraries](#) is local aid for libraries. Spending on high priced popular eBooks often limits the expansion of the rest of the collection. Libraries can use State Aid to supplement their materials budget.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9101** [Board of Library Commissioners'](#) staff work with Automated Networks to support the statewide eContent lending program.

## A trusted space for immigrants

Libraries serve as gateways to citizenship, English language learning, and civic engagement. For example, [Worcester Public Library's](#) program offers language learning, books and resources in 13 languages, and assistance with citizenship. [Framingham Public Library's "Finding Your Way"](#) helps with everything from housing to transportation. The Watertown Free Public Library is at the center of the [Multicultural Fest](#). At libraries, immigrant families connect with neighbors so that relationships form, creating communities where diversity is celebrated.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9508** [Massachusetts Center for the Book](#) offers family literacy programming in gateway cities.

**Funding Priority: 7000-9101** [Board of Library Commissioners'](#) staff work with libraries on grants that enable programming for immigrants including, ESOL and citizenship classes.



\* MBI survey respondents in Northeast Massachusetts;

\*\* MBI survey respondents statewide

Line Item Number	Line Name	FY2023	FY2024	PROPOSED INCREASE	FY2025 REQUEST
<b>7000-9101</b>	<i>Board of Library Commissioners</i>	\$1,731,586	\$1,904,745	\$190,475	\$2,095,220
<b>7000-9401</b>	<i>Regional Libraries Local Aid</i>	\$14,516,000	\$16,717,600	\$835,880	\$17,553,480
<b>7000-9402</b>	<i>Talking Book Program Worcester</i>	\$521,569	\$678,040	\$33,902	\$711,942
<b>7000-9406</b>	<i>Talking Book Program (Perkins) Watertown</i>	\$2,969,554	\$3,860,420	\$193,021	\$4,053,441
<b>7000-9501</b>	<i>Public Libraries Local Aid</i>	\$16,000,000	\$17,600,000	\$2,400,000	\$20,000,000
<b>7000-9506</b>	<i>Technology &amp; Resource Sharing</i>	\$4,744,293	\$6,167,581	\$308,379	\$6,475,960
<b>7000-9508</b>	<i>Center for the Book</i>	\$400,000	\$420,000	\$80,000	\$500,000
		<b>\$40,883,002</b>	<b>\$47,348,386</b>	<b>\$4,041,657</b>	<b>\$51,390,043</b>

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Consumer Portal: [libraries.state.ma.us](http://libraries.state.ma.us) | Agency Site: [mass.gov/mblc](http://mass.gov/mblc)

[mblclegislativeagenda.com](http://mblclegislativeagenda.com)