It all starts at the library

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MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

FOR THE **COMMON GOOD** SINCE **1890**

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Libraries help make life in Massachusetts affordable

- Libraries support jobseekers. **50+ Job Seekers Networking Groups** offered in many libraries including Dedham, Quincy, Belmont, Newton, and Malden are just one example of how libraries help people develop new relationships, skills and strategies for a career transition.
- For individuals and families working to stay within their budgets, free programs, family events, and learning opportunities at the library offer real relief. **Every dollar saved by borrowing books, eBooks, and audiobooks free from the public library becomes a dollar freed up for groceries on the table**.
- Libraries lend technology. **For many people, laptops and tablets aren't affordable, but libraries bridge that gap** by lending devices along with Wi-Fi hotspots.

Key to solving lagging literacy rates

- ➔ Approximately 60%* of Massachusetts students in both grades four and eight are below proficient in reading. Data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shows that around 25% of students are falling 'below benchmark levels'.
- ➔ Reading for enjoyment is the best way to nurture lifelong readers and help people get hooked on reading. **Librarians connect people with stories that help them fall in love with reading**.
- ➔ **Public libraries build literacy, confidence and connection** from early childhood through the teen years through story times, Mother Goose on the Loose, bilingual story times, Read to a Therapy Dog, Teen Anime, STEAM programs and Girls Who Code programs.
- ➔ Schools are a primary source of reading materials for students yet **40% of students are without a licensed school library teacher**, leaving students and educators without co-teacher support in reading, media, digital, and information literacy.

* National Assessment of Educational Progress

Non-traditional library services are filling the gaps caused by eroding safety nets

- Public libraries in Cambridge, Somerville, Worcester and Boston have hired **full-time library social workers** to support many needs including benefits eligibility and applications, food resources, housing, and employment; and resources for immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ+, and justice-impacted people.

continued

- Plymouth Public Library's Recovery Corner provides low-barrier access to **information on substance use disorder, treatment options and centers**, as well as harm reduction centers and supplies.
- The Montague Public Library developed teen-centric programming and collections that **address social isolation and mental health among tweens and teens**. This project is in partnership with The Brick House, a nonprofit youth resource center.
- Libraries across the Commonwealth are places of welcome and **support for immigrants**. English and citizenship classes, conversation circles, connections to social service agencies, and programs for families are happening every day to help newcomers find connection and community.

Expanding possibilities for people with disabilities

Libraries across the state are loaning integrated assistive and adaptive technology to patrons with disabilities. These range from practical tools, such as wheelchairs and eyeglasses, to high-tech tools like screen readers and cutting-edge screen interpreters driven by artificial intelligence.

Local Aid to Libraries is a lifeline and it's our priority

More people than ever are turning to public libraries. Last year they checked out more than 65 million items, a record high. State Aid to Public Libraries (7000-9501) helps libraries **keep pace with increasing demand for services**.

- The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners is **prioritizing a 5% increase to local aid to libraries** through the State Aid to Public Libraries Program, line 7000-9501, raising funding from $20 million in FY26 to $21 million.
- State Aid to Public Libraries is **critical, local aid** for libraries that they use to maintain core services. It has a **massive impact** across the Commonwealth with 347 out of 351 municipalities certified in the program and receiving state aid funding.

Line Item Number	Line Name	FY2026 BUDGET	FY2027 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA REQUEST	FY2027 INCREASED AMOUNTS	FY2027 INCREASE PERCENT
7000-9101	BLC Support and Outreach Services	$2,052,927	$2,114,514	$61,587	3%
7000-9401	State Aid to Regional Libraries	$19,000,000	$19,570,000	$570,000	3%
7000-9402	Worcester Talking Book	$711,942	$733,300	$21,358	3%
7000-9406	Perkins Talking Book	$4,053,441	$4,175,044	$121,603	3%
7000-9501	**State Aid to Public Libraries**	**$20,000,000**	**$21,000,000**	**$1,000,000**	**5%**
7000-9506	Library Technology & Resource Sharing	$6,172,690	$6,357,870	$185,180	3%
7000-9508	Center for the Book	$420,000	$432,600	$12,600	3%
TOTAL STATE FUNDING		**$52,411,000**	**$54,383,328**	**$1,972,328**	**3.76%**