



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

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MEMORANDUM

To: Massachusetts State Legislators

From: George T. Comeau, Esq., Chairman
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

Date: June 9, 2010

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) is deeply concerned with two amendments that are currently in Conference Committee on the FY2011 state budget. Both the House and Senate budgets have language attached to the State Aid to Public Libraries (7000-9501) and Library of Last Recourse (7000-9401) line items that would require the Boston Public Library (Worcester and Springfield as well) to maintain branch operations as they were in January 2010. This language, intended to preserve Boston branch libraries, will likely have unintended negative consequences for libraries and patrons statewide. In an effort to bring additional information to the table as you discuss these amendments; please be aware of the following:

- **Taking funding away from Boston Public Library through the Library of Last Recourse (LLR) may limit patron access to statewide online library resources:** In FY2009, patrons spent an average of 180,000 hours *everyday* using online library resources. For FY2011, the MBLC, the LLR and other library agencies combined funding to maximize the purchase of online resources that are accessible and available to every Massachusetts resident. Pulling funding away from LLR jeopardizes this agreement and patron access to these heavily used resources.
- **The loss of state aid funding to the Boston Public Library (Worcester and Springfield as well) may limit non-Boston residents' access to library resources:** In FY2009, Boston lent over 600,000 items to non-Boston residents. To help offset the cost of reciprocal borrowing and non-resident lending, libraries, including the Boston Public Library, receive funding through the State Aid to Public Libraries Program. If Boston Public Library does not receive state aid funding, it may opt out of the State Aid to Public Libraries Program entirely. This means that the Boston Public Library would not be required to lend materials to other libraries nor would it be required to serve residents from other communities. Thirty-four percent of Boston library card holders live outside of Boston, in communities across the Commonwealth. These residents could lose borrowing privileges.

The MBLC greatly appreciates the Legislators' efforts to keep libraries funded and open so that our residents can access vital services, but the budget language referred to above could have a wider negative impact that would limit patron access across the state. It is in the spirit of providing you with fuller information and potential impacts that I convey to you this information. As always, thank you for your support for the public library system in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.