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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO LIBRARIES -- STATE AID TO LIBRARIES -- FREEDOM TO READ

Introduced By: Senators McKenney, Gallo, Euer, Gu, Mack, and Miller

Date Introduced: February 12, 2024

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The general assembly hereby finds that the Rhode Island constitution states  
2 that it shall be the duty of the general assembly to promote public libraries, and to adopt all means  
3 which it may deem necessary and proper to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities  
4 of education and public library services.

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

7 **29-6-1. Statement of policy.**

8 (a) The general assembly hereby declares it to be the policy of this state:

9 (1) That free public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a  
10 democracy;

11 (2) That these free public libraries shall provide for the cultural, educational, informational,  
12 and research needs of all citizens;

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

16 (4) That it is the responsibility of government at all levels to provide adequate financial  
17 support for all free public libraries;

18 (5) That it is the responsibility of government at all levels to protect the freedom to read  
19 and to support the right of free people to read freely; and

1           (6) That free public libraries provide equitable access to information for all citizens.

2           (b) The general assembly further declares it to be the policy of this state to coordinate on a  
3 cooperative basis the resources of academic, free public, school, and special libraries to meet the  
4 expanding needs of all citizens and that it is the responsibility of government at all levels to provide  
5 adequate financial support to coordinate library resources throughout the state for improved library  
6 services to all citizens.

7           (c) The general assembly further declares it to be the policy of this state to encourage and  
8 protect the freedom of public libraries to acquire and deaccession materials without external  
9 limitations and to be protected against attempts to ban, remove, censor or otherwise restrict access  
10 to books and other materials.

11           (d) The general assembly further declares it to be the policy of this state that materials  
12 should not be proscribed or removed from public libraries because of partisan or doctrinal  
13 disapproval; that public libraries shall provide an adequate collection of books and other materials  
14 sufficient in size and varied in subject matter to satisfy the library needs of the people of their  
15 community; and that the practice of banning, removing, censoring or otherwise restricting access  
16 to specific books or resources due to partisan or doctrinal disapproval is prohibited.

17           SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO LIBRARIES -- STATE AID TO LIBRARIES -- FREEDOM TO READ

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1           This act would encourage and protect the freedom of public libraries to acquire and  
2 deaccession materials without limitations and to be protected against attempts to ban, censor or  
3 otherwise restrict access to books and other materials. This act further prohibits materials being  
4 removed from public libraries due to partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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