

2026 -- H 7691

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO LIBRARIES -- STATE AID TO LIBRARIES

Introduced By: Representatives Stewart, Morales, Casimiro, Giraldo, Alzate, McNamara,
Tanzi, Boylan, Kazarian, and Messier

Date Introduced: February 11, 2026

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings of facts.

2 The general assembly makes the following findings:

3 (1) The Constitution of the State of Rhode Island Article XII of Education, Section 1 states
4 that it "shall be the duty of the general assembly to promote public schools and public libraries, and
5 to adopt all means which it may deem necessary and proper to secure to the people the advantages
6 and opportunities of education and public library services."

7 (2) Free public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a
8 democracy;

9 (3) Free public libraries provide for the cultural, educational, informational, and research
10 needs of all citizens;

11 (4) Free public libraries are an integral part of the educational system at all levels and a
12 source for vocational information and continued learning, following the period of formal education;

13 (5) It is the responsibility of government at all levels to provide adequate financial support
14 for all free public libraries;

15 (6) Throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, public libraries across Rhode Island
16 have adopted creative strategies to support their communities through daily virtual programming,
17 free audiobook subscriptions, takeaway activity bags for youth, curbside book pick-ups, printing
18 services, and limited indoor browsing.

19 SECTION 2. Section 29-6-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 29-6 entitled "State Aid to

1 Libraries" is hereby amended to read as follows:

2 (a) For each city or town, the state's share to support local public library services shall be
3 equal to at least twenty-five percent (25%) of both the amount appropriated and expended in the
4 second preceding fiscal year by the city or town from local tax revenues and funds from the public
5 library's private endowment that supplement the municipal appropriation; provided, however, the
6 state in any year shall not be obligated to match any amount from the endowment that exceeds six
7 percent (6%) of the three-year (3) average market value, calculated at the end of the calendar year,
8 of the investments in the endowment. The amount of the grant payable to each municipality in any
9 year in accordance with this section shall be reduced proportionately in the event that the total of
10 those grants in any year exceeds the amount appropriated that year for the purposes of this section.

11 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, in fiscal year 2027, the
12 state shall pay each city and town a fixed twenty-five percent (25%) of the amount appropriated
13 and expended by the city or town in the second preceding fiscal year, from local tax revenues and
14 from the public library's private endowment that supplement the municipal appropriation for public
15 library services.

16 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

1 This act would require that the state's share to support public library services in fiscal year
2 2027 be fixed at twenty-five percent (25%) of the amount appropriated and expended by the city
3 or town in the second preceding fiscal year.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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