

2026 -- H 8168

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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 Cortvriend, Finkelman, Kislak, Edwards, McGaw, and
Morales

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings and purpose.

2 The general assembly hereby finds and declares that:

3 (1) The State of Rhode Island recognizes that public libraries are essential civic institutions
4 that provide free and equitable access to information, literacy resources, educational opportunities,
5 technology, and cultural enrichment for residents of all ages;

6 (2) Rhode Island’s public libraries play a critical role in supporting early childhood literacy,
7 K–12 student achievement, higher education, and lifelong learning, thereby advancing the
8 educational and economic well-being of the state;

9 (3) Many public library buildings and facilities within the state are aging, undersized, or
10 otherwise inadequate to meet current and emerging community needs, including the demand for
11 digital access, collaborative learning spaces, quiet study areas, and flexible community
12 programming;

13 (4) Numerous library facilities require construction, renovation, or modernization in order
14 to comply with current health, safety, and accessibility standards, including requirements under the
15 Americans with Disabilities Act (the “ADA”), and to ensure that all residents of the state, including
16 individuals with disabilities and older adults, can safely and fully utilize library services;

17 (5) Investment in the construction, renovation, and modernization of public library
18 facilities promotes local economic development, supports small businesses and workforce
19 development programs, creates construction and related jobs, and enhances the quality of life in

1 communities throughout the state;

2 (6) Energy efficient, resilient, and technologically up-to-date library buildings reduce
3 operating costs for municipalities, advance the state's environmental and resilience goals, and
4 ensure continuity of essential community services during emergencies;

5 (7) Modern, well equipped public libraries serve as vital community hubs that support civic
6 engagement, public meetings, community partnerships, access to government information, and
7 emergency response and recovery efforts;

8 (8) Rhode Island state Regulations for Library Construction Reimbursement were
9 promulgated in 2018 (the "2018 regulations") and refiled without change on January 4, 2022;

10 (9) The 2018 regulations provide for fifty percent (50%) reimbursement of expenditures
11 for eligible projects subject to reimbursement caps that were established in 2018;

12 (10) Publicly available data reflect that, between 2019 and 2025 the Boston Consumer
13 Price Index (a commonly used measure of inflation for the region) has increased between 1.1% and
14 7.1% annually, resulting in a total cumulative inflationary increase of 23.4% over that period;

15 (11) Due to this sustained inflation, library projects can no longer be feasibly undertaken
16 within the reimbursement caps set forth in the 2018 regulations; and

17 (12) The general assembly finds that it is in the public interest to increase, by statute, the
18 reimbursement caps established in the 2018 regulations on an interim basis, pending promulgation
19 of amended regulations.

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

22 **29-6-6. Construction and capital improvements.**

23 The office of library and information services may cause to be paid to a city or town
24 treasurer, or to any free public library in the state, a grant-in-aid for the construction and capital
25 improvement of any free public library as the chief of library services may determine is necessary
26 and desirable to provide better free library services to the public, which shall be paid in accordance
27 with the following provisions:

28 (1) No grant-in-aid shall be made unless the city or town receiving the grant-in-aid shall
29 cause to be appropriated for the same purpose an amount from its own funds and not from any
30 federal grant or other federal financial assistance equal to, or more than, the state grant-in-aid, or
31 unless funds from private sources are dedicated for the same purpose in an amount equal to, or
32 more than, the state grant-in-aid, or unless the total of the city or town appropriation and the funds
33 from private sources for the same purpose is equal to, or more than, the state grant-in-aid.

34 (2) The state grant-in-aid may be paid in installments over a period of years up to a

1 maximum of twenty (20) years, beginning in the fiscal year during which the project is accepted
2 by the office of library and information services. Whenever a grant-in-aid is paid on the installment
3 basis permitted herein, there shall be included in the state grant-in-aid the interest cost actually
4 incurred by the city or town, or any free public library, as a result of its having to borrow the state's
5 portion of the total cost of the library project. The amount of this interest cost shall be computed
6 on the actual interest cost paid by the city or town, or free public library, less any applicable accrued
7 interest, premiums, which are not applied to project costs, and profits from investments, over the
8 period of time elapsing between the date borrowed funds are made available and the date of the last
9 installment payment of the state grant-in-aid. Interest cost incurred by the city or town, or any free
10 public library, as a result of having to borrow its portion of the total cost of the library project shall
11 not be considered a part of the total cost of the project for the purposes of matching provided for in
12 subdivision (1) of this section. Nothing contained herein shall prohibit the office of library and
13 information services from accelerating the schedule of annual installments, or from paying the
14 balance due of the state's grant-in-aid in a lump sum; provided, however, that the state grant-in-aid
15 in any fiscal year shall include no less than one-twentieth ($\frac{1}{20}$) of the state's total reimbursable
16 principal obligations.

17 (3) Notwithstanding the provisions of the state regulations for library construction
18 reimbursement promulgated in 2018 (the "2018 regulations"), which regulations were filed without
19 change on January 4, 2022, the reimbursement caps for eligible project costs incurred during the
20 period commencing June 30, 2025 and ending on June 30, 2031, or ending on such earlier date as
21 the office of library information services promulgates amendments to the 2018 regulations which
22 increase reimbursement caps to amounts above those amounts set forth in this subsection for the
23 effective period shall be as follows:

24 (i) Construction costs are eligible for fifty percent (50%) reimbursement of expenditures
25 up to the amount of three hundred seventy dollars and twenty cents (\$370.20) per square foot for
26 new construction or three hundred and eight dollars and fifty cents (\$308.50) per square foot for
27 renovation and remodeling. If the actual construction costs exceed one or both of these amounts
28 per square foot, the state share shall be based on the not-to-exceeded amounts. Cost per square foot
29 shall be determined by the cost of contracts for new construction and/or contracts for expansion,
30 remodeling and alteration of existing buildings.

31 (ii) Site costs, including demolition, sitework, the acquisition of a site or building, site
32 improvement and parking lots, are reimbursable up to the lesser amount of one million two hundred
33 thirty-four thousand dollars (\$1,234,000) or ten percent (10%) of the total project cost less the site
34 costs.

1 (iii) The total amount of reimbursement for any project shall not exceed twelve million
2 three hundred forty thousand dollars (\$12,340,000).

3 (iv) Allowable costs include financing leases, but not operating leases, of library facilities,
4 including land acquisition, construction, renovation, expansion, landscaping, parking facilities,
5 fixtures, furnishings and equipment, fire suppression systems, and expenses related to meeting a
6 high performance green building standard such as, but not limited to, the Leadership in Energy and
7 Environmental Design (“LEED”) standard. Any library or municipality that finances or refinances
8 a project with bonds, notes, financing leases, or other evidences of indebtedness shall not require
9 pre-approval from the office of library services, but shall file the financing or refinancing
10 documents with the office of library services after the financing transaction is complete.

11 (4) Notwithstanding any provision of law or agreement to the contrary, the increases in the
12 caps on state grant-in-aid reimbursement for construction or capital improvement projects pursuant
13 to the provisions of this subsection shall apply retroactively to all eligible project costs incurred on
14 or after July 1, 2025, whether the costs are subject to reimbursement under agreements executed
15 before, on, or after June 1, 2025. All reimbursement agreements for construction or capital
16 improvement projects executed by the office of library and information services shall be deemed
17 amended by operation of law to incorporate the increased caps with respect to eligible project costs
18 incurred during the effective period, and the office of library and information services is authorized
19 and directed to adjust reimbursement payments accordingly, subject to the availability of
20 appropriated funds. Any maximum dollar amount, percentage, or other cap on state grant-in-aid
21 reimbursement for construction or capital improvement projects established under, this subsection
22 shall automatically increase by three percent (3%) on July 1 of each year, beginning July 1, 2027.

23 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 increase on an interim basis, by statute, the reimbursement caps established
2 in the state's Regulations for Library Construction Reimbursement promulgated in 2018, pending
3 promulgation of amended regulations. The increased caps would apply to eligible costs for library
4 projects incurred during the period commencing June 30, 2025 and ending on June 30, 2031, or
5 ending on such earlier date as the Office of Library Information Services promulgates amendments
6 to the regulations which increase reimbursement caps to amounts above those amounts set forth in
7 this act. The amendments made by this act would apply retroactively to all eligible project costs
8 incurred during the effective period, whether such costs are subject to reimbursement under
9 agreements executed before, on, or after June 1, 2025.

10 This act would take effect upon passage.

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