



## **LIBRARY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20201217-3a: Support for Equitable Access to Austin Public Library Resources for Students**

Date: December 17, 2020

Subject: Support for Equitable Access to Austin Public Library Resources for Students

Motioned By: Commissioner Dabbert

Seconded By: Commissioner Trieu

### **Recommendation**

Give student library cards at no cost to every student in Travis County enrolled in a K-12 educational institution or home school.

### **Description of Recommendation to Council**

Requesting that the Austin City Council do away with non-resident library card fees for students who do not reside in the City of Austin, but who do reside in Travis County and are enrolled in a K-12 educational institution including home schools.

### **Rationale:**

The Austin Public Library has a commitment to equity, to assure that all members of the Austin community have equal access to Library services and programs. However, the American Library Association and numerous public library systems around the country have recognized the challenge that economic barriers to access of library materials and services pose. This barrier is especially true for students. In a Resolution passed on January 27, 2019, the American Library Association urged libraries to scrutinize their practices of imposing fines on library patrons and actively move towards eliminating them. On June 22, 2020, this Commission unanimously passed a recommendation that City Council eliminate these late fees. Since October 1, 2018, the Austin Public Library has not charged fees for late returns of children's materials.

While the elimination of late fees on children's materials is a good step in the right direction, many students in Austin and surrounding areas face another economic barrier to access in the form of the non-resident card fee of \$120 annually. Currently, only Austinites living in Austin's "full purpose" jurisdiction are entitled to receive a library card free of charge. This non-resident fee affects students of families who live in Austin's extra-territorial jurisdiction as well as those who work in Austin but live in the surrounding areas. Benefits that will be achieved by offering greater access to students far outweigh the potential loss of revenue. The revenue from non-resident youth cards, inclusive of these students was \$101,002 in FY '17 and \$135,681 in FY '18.

Currently, the Austin Public Library provides full-access library cards to all students enrolled in the Austin Independent School District and the Del Valle Independent School District regardless of their home address. As Director of Libraries Roosevelt Weeks said at the time the AISD partnership was

announced, “A library-school partnership makes sense—we both seek to advance literacy and we both understand the importance of access to resources that promote learning.”

**Vote**

For: Chair Hanna, Vice Chair Self, Commissioners Aguilar, Dabbert, Dwyer, and Trieu

Against: none

Abstain:

Absent: Commissioners Pardo-Kaplan and Ramos

Attest: 