



## PRIORITIES FOR THE 85<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### *Ensuring the Quality and Viability of Public Library Services*

The Texas Library Association's (TLA) almost 7,000 member librarians *oppose SB 902* relating to a prohibition on the adoption of certain library standards by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC).

**SB 902 would diminish the quality of library services throughout the state, and dilutes and devalues legitimate public library service by eliminating common baselines for professionalism, services and resources**

#### Background: Accreditation Standards

- To participate in state programs including TexShare and interlibrary loan, and to be eligible for competitive grants, public libraries must meet minimum accreditation standards
- Library stakeholders and local governments representing all areas of the state, and communities of all sizes, collaborated with TSLAC to develop the minimum standards
- The minimum standards set reasonable, reachable, and essential expectations for basic library services while being respectful of local economic challenges
- 93% of Texas' public libraries meet the minimum standards

#### About SB 902

**Prohibits TSLAC from requiring libraries to meet minimum accreditation standards related to:**

- Local operating expenditures
- Collections based on publication dates
- Hours of operation
- The number or classification of library employees

**Libraries would still have to meet the following criteria:**

- Definition of population served
- Public library service (library services provided free to people in the service area, discretionary charges, etc.)
- Public library legal establishment (department of city/county government, library district, multi-jurisdictional library districts, or non-profit corporation)
- Nondiscrimination
- Items per capita –quantitative standards
- Other requirements (i.e. having a website, photocopier, participating in interlibrary loan, having a catalog, having a long-range plan)

## Impact & Outcomes

### **Removes minimum accountability standards which enable TSLAC to be a good steward of public funds on behalf of the state and taxpayers, and ensure that state resources are used responsibly**

- Texas invests over \$7 million annually in online resources for public libraries, over \$2 million in competitive grants, and \$3 million for interlibrary lending
- Minimum standards ensure that state and federal resources support, but do not substitute for local service

### **Threatens the quality and fiscal viability of local library services**

- Minimum standards ensure a common baseline for library service to benefit the public
- Marginal enterprises could represent themselves as “libraries,” diminishing the value of legitimate public library service while siphoning limited resources available to libraries that operate within the common standard of professional and fiscally-secure administration
- Libraries that are currently non-accredited could participate in state-funded library programs, diminishing the effectiveness of the funds, and creating a lack of responsible oversight of these state funds

### **Reverses decades of progress in library service development, which would lead to a decline in services to the public**

- Minimum standards set a statewide benchmark for professionalism, services and resources
- Minimum standards have resulted in an increase in the quality of library service to communities of all sizes in all parts of the state
- Removing minimum standards would have a decisive negative impact on the quality of library services Texans expect and deserve
- With minimum standards in place, Texas ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in per capita support for public libraries; without standards that minimal support will begin to erode

### **Threatens local support of communities’ basic library needs, negatively impacting the local economy**

- Every \$1 invested in public libraries returns \$4.64 in economic benefits; therefore, every \$1 reduction in public library investment reduces economic benefits and services by \$4.64
- Many Texas public libraries receive only borderline support from their local governments and without minimum standards are at risk of losing support that is essential to operating a functional library for the public benefit
- Communities with public libraries that are at or near the minimum staffing required by the standards may see a loss of jobs which also negatively impacts the quality of library services

#### **For more information contact:**

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