
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: SB 683
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Urgency: No
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Public library services: foundation program

SUMMARY

This bill modifies the definition of the “foundation program” thereby authorizing the use of funds for this purpose to include technology services provided by public libraries, for the purchase of equipment and payment of fees for major capital projects, and makes other technical changes.

BACKGROUND

Existing law declares that each public library provide a minimum level of service, known as the foundation program, to the extent state funds are made available. Existing law defines the foundation program as those elements of library services which are basic to its function as a provider of information, education, and cultural enrichment to all segments of the community, including but not limited to, collection development and maintenance, lending services, information services, facility maintenance, and administration. Existing law specifically excludes “major capital improvements” from the foundation program, defined as the purchase of real property, the construction or improvement of buildings and the purchase of the equipment and the payment of fees or other costs in connection with the same. (Education Code §18013 and 18015)

Existing law establishes the Public Library Fund for the purposes of funding the foundation program for public libraries. (EC § 18024)

ANALYSIS

This bill expands the use of funds for the purposes of the library foundation program. Specifically it:

1. Adds technology to the list of services provided by public libraries deemed an element of the foundation program.
2. Deletes the exclusion of the cost of equipment and fees related to major capital projects from the foundation program thereby potentially expanding the elements of the foundation program to include these costs.
3. Makes other non-substantive technical changes.

STAFF COMMENTS

1. ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, this bill is a technical cleanup of Education Code section 18015 pertaining to public libraries. The library foundation program provided direct state aid to California public libraries for basic public library services. This bill, to the extent funding is available, makes technology services and equipment purchases and fees related to major capital improvements an acceptable use of these funds.
2. ***Federal Library Services and Technology Act.*** The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) supports libraries in the 50 states through funding from the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), which is administered in California by the State Librarian. The funds are used to promote, through a competitive grant process, improvements in services to all types of libraries; to facilitate access to, and sharing of, resources and services through the California State Library; and to achieve economical and effective delivery of service for the purpose of cultivating an educated and informed citizenry. In addition, LSTA funds are targeted for statewide library services and support a wide array of programs, from early learning to digital access and preservation. In order to clearly reflect this and other existing programs, this bill includes technology services as a basic function of public libraries under the foundation program.
3. ***Public Library Fund.*** The Public Library Foundation was established by legislation in 1982 by Senator Nielsen (Chapter 1498, Statutes of 1982). Under the Davis administration, funding for the program was greatly reduced and subsequently defunded under in fiscal year 2011-12. The stated intent of the program was to embody the State's interest in the general diffusion of information and knowledge through free public libraries; encourage lifelong learning; supplement the system of free public education; help libraries serve as sources of information and inspiration to persons of all ages, cultural backgrounds and economic status; and furnish a resource for continuing education. If the program were to receive state funding in the future this bill would clarify that funds can be spent on technology services.

Current law prohibits appropriation of these funds, to the extent funding is made available, for major capital improvements, defined as the purchase of real property, the construction or improvement of buildings and the purchase of the equipment and the payment of fees or other costs in connection with the same. Omitting fee payments and equipment purchases from the statute would give libraries greater flexibility to use Public Library Funds for those stated purposes.

SUPPORT

None received.

OPPOSITION

None received.