



LEADING THE ADVANCEMENT OF ALL
MICHIGAN LIBRARIES THROUGH ADVOCACY,
EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Statement of Principle – Civil Fines and Penal Fines for Library Funding

The Michigan Constitution states that all fines assessed for breaches of penal laws must be exclusively applied for the support of libraries. This provision has been in place since the first state constitution in 1835 and has been reaffirmed in subsequent constitutions. In addition to penal fines, Michigan law specifies that civil fines ordered under section 907 of the Michigan Vehicle Code should also exclusively be applied to support libraries.

Any proposed legislation that creates an exception for the use of fines diverts these critical funds from their intended purpose of supporting public libraries. For example, recent legislative proposals such as HB 4921 and HB 5726 sought to divert fines for the installation and maintenance of speed detection systems in school zones. While the intent of these bills is to enhance public safety, the diversion of fines away from libraries sets a concerning precedent.

MLA advocates for alternative funding mechanisms that do not compromise library funding. We believe that ASSESSMENTS or FEES specifically designated for new initiatives should be implemented in new and updated legislation. This approach has been successfully implemented in other areas where assessments are used to fund specific services without diverting fines from their intended purposes.

By upholding the principle that penal and civil fines should support libraries, we ensure that these vital institutions continue to thrive and serve our communities. We urge legislators to consider the long-term impact of diverting fines and to seek alternative funding solutions that protect the financial health of our public libraries.