Update on MLA's Work to Address Changes to the Michigan Library Privacy Act

December 19, 2019

Since the introduction of SB611 by Senator Peter MacGregor on October 29, MLA has been gathering input from library directors, deans and others about support and concern on the proposed changes. MLA believes that library privacy is a core value to librarianship and any changes to the Privacy Act should be vetted through the proper channels. This bill was introduced without MLA input. MLA has taken the past 45 days to gather your thoughts and try to find a way to find compromises to the concerns that you've brought to our attention in order to get the best possible changes in front of Senator MacGregor by mid-January when it is expected to move forward in the legislative process.

Please Note: MLA values all voices being heard, all possible solutions being vetted, and that we hope to contribute to a final bill that libraries throughout the state feel is in their best interest and can support. The MLA Legislative Committee ended their last meeting recommending a small sub-group, who represent both sides, come together face-to-face, to converse and try to build consensus by adding, strengthening and editing language that takes into account the concerns we've documented. Along with MLA staff and Governmental Consultant Services, Inc. (GCSI) representative, Bob DeVries, those present included Lance Werner (Kent District Library), Larry Neal (Clinton-Macomb District Library), Jenny Marr (Ferndale Public Library), Julia Eisenstein (University of Detroit Mercy), Randy Riley (Library of Michigan), Clare Membiela (Library of Michigan), Josie Parker (Ann Arbor District Library), and Anne Seurynck (Foster, Swift, Collins and Smith, PC).

Issues/concerns with the bill that the sub-committee discussed at length included:

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Definition of a Crime

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The May/Shall Not – in the updated language the burden would fall on the library director to decide or not decide to hand over library records

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Reading and circulation history of patrons

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Surveillance videos – are they a patron record

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No reference to Third Party Vendors being held to the same standard on privacy rights

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Removal of personal liability of library personnel who make the decision

We are working with Anne Seurynck on recommended changes to the bill language. MLA will use our newly defined legislative guidelines for recommendations to move it forward through the MLA Advocacy & Legislative Committee and MLA Board for a decision that we will share with the membership as soon as we have something concrete. We will then take the updates to Senator MacGregor and reiterate the importance of all libraries having a voice in something that affects them all on a daily basis.If you would like to have a conversation, please do not hesitate to contact Executive Director, Deborah E. Mikula at dmikula@milibraries.org or by phone at (517)394-2774 ext. 224.