

Sarah Skawinski

Topsham

LD 2106

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Maine Library Association (MLA), representing hundreds of library professionals across the state, we urge you to vote in support of LD 2106, An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review.

We thank the bill sponsors for including public libraries in this legislation. Public libraries are a vital public service, and library staff are dedicated to ensuring that our spaces are safe, inclusive, and accessible. Public libraries are essential infrastructure for Maine communities and a lifeline for Maine citizens.

In many Maine towns, the library is the only institution open to everyone. We provide the critical services that keep our state functioning: workforce development, literacy programs, and the technology access required for modern life. We are the front lines for Maine's most vulnerable populations, providing the secure environment needed to apply for jobs, access assistance programs, and consult with on-site social workers.

Because we provide these high-stakes services, patron privacy is not optional. If Maine citizens fear that their presence or their inquiries can be disclosed without judicial oversight, the library's ability to serve the public is fundamentally compromised. LD 2106 provides the statutory certainty required to keep these essential spaces secure.

Privacy is an essential aspect of library work, and as professionals, we are legally mandated under 27 MRSA §121 to maintain confidentiality of our patron records. This statute strictly protects the confidentiality of library patron records—including personally identifying information (PII) and records of materials used—across public, state, and university libraries. While current law is clear that these records may only be released via written permission or a court order, LD 2106 provides the essential procedural framework to uphold these protections. By requiring proper judicial review, this legislation ensures that Maine's librarians have a clear, statutory shield when faced with law enforcement requests that lack a judicial warrant, thereby preventing the unauthorized disclosure of sensitive patron data.

The aspect of this legislation that provides policy guidance to libraries is also valuable, and we support it. Maine has 258 public libraries, most of them small and rural, and statewide guidance for policy will be extremely beneficial. Maine's rural directors often operate in isolation with little time away from the public desk to resolve information needs. Centralized guidance from LD 2106 acts as a force multiplier, giving these small-town directors the same legal clarity as those in our largest cities. MLA can partner with the state to help promote and publicize this guidance to our membership.

Most importantly, this legislation will support public library staff in doing what we do best – serving the public, meeting community needs, and ensuring that all of our community members can access our vital services without fear.

We respectfully urge you to vote Ought to Pass in support of this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Skawinski, President

Maine Library Association

On behalf of the MLA Executive Board