

linda porelle
westbrook
LD 2212

My name is Linda Porelle and I live in Westbrook. I'm writing today as both a patron of the Talking Book Library and as Vice President of the American Council of the Blind of Maine. As a blind child growing up in Maine in the 1950s and 1960s, I relied on receiving talking books from the Perkins School for the Blind Library in Massachusetts. I went to college out of state and lived away from Maine for many years.

When I moved back to Westbrook in 2022, I was pleased to find that the Maine State Library had established our own Talking Book Library, making it far more convenient to contact them and order the reading materials so important to our blindness community.

As a library patron and advocate for library services, I support the funding request described below.

Chris Boynton is a highly valuable member of the Library Services team. At our invitation, Chris attended the ACB Maine annual state convention on November 2, 2025 in Augusta. He brought along the newest device for listening to book for us to examine and answered questions about how it works and how to obtain one. He also provided informational material in print and braille, including the application forms to sign up for services.

Although we continue to rely on the Perkins School Library for supplying braille books to Maine Library patrons, the presence and availability of staff like Chris Boynton is invaluable. Please do not sacrifice this important service on the altar of federal badly conceived cost cutting whims!

For emphasis, I'm including remarks from the State Librarian, who clearly outlines the issue at hand.

Sincerely,
Linda Porelle

MSL's federal funding is still uncertain year to year for the first time since 1997.

While we expect FY26 federal IMLS LSTA monies (the Library has not yet received an official award letter and doesn't expect one until late March), there is still the threat of a rescission process, the two lawsuits are still in motion (with the 21 states lawsuit facing an appeal from the administration – the current permanent injunction is the only thing keeping IMLS staff employed and functioning), and we do not know if the President again will zero out IMLS in his FY27 budget proposal slated to be released around the time of his State of the Union on 2/24.

There are too many uncertainties to risk losing the key staff person responsible for services to the blind & print disabled community through Talking Books if our federal funding is rescinded or does not continue into the federal FY27 budget year.

the Maine State Library has already been significantly affected by federal budget cuts to the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). These cuts directly impact Chris Boynton's current position as Director of Outreach Services, particularly his role as Network Librarian for the Talking Book program