

Maine State Library
Testimony – Caroline Ward-Nesbit, Thomaston Public Library

Second Regular Session, 132nd Maine Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

LD 2212 – “An Act Making Unified Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027.”

February 20, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs; Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am providing testimony in support of the Maine State Library’s items in the Supplemental Budget, which appear on pages A-89 and A-90 of Part A of the budget proposal.

Introduction

Thomaston Public Library, like most libraries in Maine, serves a small town but is an integral part of the community. Some of the most important services we provide – interlibrary loan, access to digital audiobooks and ebooks through Download Library, online database access through Digital Maine Library, and free high-speed internet access, to name a few – are only possible for a small library such as ours through the robust resource sharing long established in Maine and managed by the Maine State Library (MSL) and their partners.

Maine State Library general fund 0217: Page A-89 and A-90

The leadership, support, and innovation provided by MSL are vital to the success of libraries throughout the state and help us keep our communities thriving. The challenges in accessing federal funding in 2025 and subsequent loss of several positions at MSL brought home to all of us just how critical MSL staff are in keeping the larger library community throughout Maine running smoothly. MSL, of course, did their absolute best to maintain all the services they provide and carry on, despite the devastation to their staff and morale. Stabilizing funding for the positions outlined in these

initiatives will be essential to MSL in the coming fiscal year, not only for MSL's sake but also for the rest of the library community in Maine.

Statewide Library Information System Fund 0185: Page A-90

I cannot understate the importance of Maine InfoNet (MIN), and therefore its Executive Director, to the day-to-day operations of not only my own library but most throughout the state. MIN provides technical support and management of the systems that make statewide resource sharing such as interlibrary loan, Download Library, and Digital Maine Library possible. MIN provides us very cost-effective use of the ILS program that maintains our collection and patron databases and connects us to not only other libraries within our own consortium, MILS, of small Maine libraries, but also the other consortia in the MaineCat statewide catalog. Interlibrary loan is one of the services we provide that our patrons utilize and appreciate the most because it gives them easy access to literally millions of materials. The exorbitant costs of digital audiobooks and ebooks, long a subject of discussion among library professionals, are prohibitive to a small library developing an extensive digital collection. However, the demand for digital media from libraries only increases as physical media such as audiobooks on CD continue to fall out of fashion. MIN's Download Library is the only cost-effective way most libraries in Maine can give their patrons access to the digital media they need.

Thank you for your time today. I'd be happy to answer any questions the Committee members may have.

Respectfully,



Caroline Ward-Nesbit
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