



Iowa Library Association Statement on SSB 3131

The Iowa Library Association (ILA) vehemently opposes Senate Study Bill 3131, which, if passed, will significantly undermine the autonomy of over 500 public library boards across the state. The proposed legislation not only threatens the integrity of public library governance but also jeopardizes the vital funding that sustains our libraries and their invaluable services.

Libraries are essential community resources that play a crucial role in fostering education, intellectual growth, and community engagement. The strength of our libraries lies in the local governance provided by dedicated library boards, whose members understand the unique needs and aspirations of their communities. Stripping library boards of their powers, as proposed in SSB 3131, undermines the democratic principles that guide local decision-making and diminishes the ability of these boards to tailor services to the specific needs of their communities.

Furthermore, the bill's provision to transfer library board assets to the city represents a potential misallocation of resources. Local library boards are best positioned to allocate funds judiciously, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed. A centralized approach may lead to inefficiencies, diminished accountability, and a lack of responsiveness to the diverse needs of individual communities.

Such a drastic measure threatens the operational and financial sustainability of communities and their libraries. Library operations and services heavily rely on levies as well as volunteer lowans appointed by elected bodies to represent, serve, and support the mission of their library. Libraries are cornerstones of education, providing free access to information, technology, and cultural enrichment. Diminishing public access to the process of policy development, library funding, and information access advocacy jeopardizes the very existence of these institutions, undermining their ability to serve as essential community hubs.

ILA asks all lowans to oppose SSB 3131. ILA encourages the exploration of alternative solutions that promote collaboration between library boards and local authorities while preserving the autonomy necessary for effective community service. Our libraries are irreplaceable assets, and it is crucial that we protect their ability to thrive for the benefit of current and future generations.

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