



CITY of  
*Pinellas Park*  
The Heart of Pinellas

Barbara S. Ponce Public Library

Summary of Key Discussion Points Regarding the Elimination of Overdue Fines

**Elimination of Overdue Fines – PPLC Libraries will be voting on Elimination of overdue fines throughout the County on November 9, 2020. The target implementation date is October 2021.**

### **Promoting Literacy**

Children and parents who have fines on their account often avoid returning to the library. While \$10 may not seem like much, to economically challenged families, it becomes a real barrier. Fines only keep children from being able to access more books. The library's primary mission is to promote literacy and learning. At a time when reading proficiency is falling nationwide, we are re-thinking anything that undermines that mission.

### **Teaching Responsibility**

Most children do not arrive at the library by themselves. They rely on parents to help them return library materials by driving them to the library. On the surface, overdue fines help teach responsibility to children, but ultimately, most items are late because a parent has forgotten or has not had the time to return materials. While teaching about responsible care of books and responsible borrowing is a nice byproduct of fines and fees, parents can still teach those lessons in other ways.

### **Revenue**

Historically, the library has recorded an average of \$30,000 in revenues from "Library Fees". Overdue fines account for about 75% of this amount. Lost and damaged materials account for 10-12%, and PPLC non-member fees account for the remainder. Measures have already been implemented that are reducing the amount of overdue fines assessed to borrowers; two auto-renewals have been implemented when there is no demand for an item, which means those materials will not result in overdue fines unless a borrower is extremely late. As demand for digital content grows, this naturally takes away revenue since fines are absent from digital materials.

### **Keeping Borrowers Motivated to Act Responsibly**

We believe there are alternative ways to keep borrowers motivated to return materials that can be just as effective as overdue fines. Those who rely on the library for DVDs, new bestsellers, and other items may find their borrowing privileges suspended, or their ability place new requests blocked, or their access to some of the online collections blocked. Which combination of measures is necessary is under discussion, but there is consensus that some “consequence” still needs to be in place to keep good control on the inventory as well as to maintain efficient functioning of the system that comprise the base of many borrowers’ customer service experiences.

Borrowers will still be held financially responsible for unreturned or damaged materials.

**Resolution on Eliminating Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Justice**

Whereas monetary fines present an economic barrier to access of library materials and services to the most economically vulnerable such as the homeless, the working poor, and children;

Whereas there is mounting evidence that indicates eliminating fines increases library card adoption and library usage;

Whereas monetary fines create a barrier in public relations, and absorb valuable staff time applying, collecting, and managing dues;

Whereas in a statement on reducing homelessness through library engagement, the American Library Association (ALA) declared it would implement ALA's policy on library service to the poor by means of, "Promoting the removal of all barriers to library and information services, particularly fees and overdue charges";

Whereas ALA Policy B.4.2 (Free Access to Information) "asserts that the charging of fees and levies for information services, including those services utilizing the latest information technology, is discriminatory in publicly supported institutions providing library and information services";

Whereas in Economic Barriers to Information Access, An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, ALA states "All library policies and procedures, particularly those involving fines, fees, or other user charges, should be scrutinized for potential barriers to access"; and

Whereas libraries will need to take determined and pragmatic action to dismantle practices of collecting monetary fines; and

Whereas monetary fines ultimately do not serve the core mission of the modern library; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members

1. adds a statement to the Policy Manual that establishes that "The American Library Association asserts that imposition of monetary library fines is discriminatory in publicly supported institutions providing library and information services.";
2. urges libraries of all types to stop the practice of imposing fines on library patrons; and
3. urges governing bodies to fund libraries so they are not dependent on monetary fines as a necessary source of revenue.

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