

Patrons of the Lawrence Library:

Libraries and democracy are inextricably linked, with libraries playing a crucial role in fostering informed citizens and a vibrant civil society. Public libraries in the United States have consistently promoted free access to information, a cornerstone of democratic societies, for nearly 300 years.

Any person, regardless of origin, socioeconomic status, gender, race, or ability, can gain knowledge through the library. Carla Hayden, the 14th Librarian of Congress referred to this access to information as a "[great equalizer and unifier](#)." Former President of the American Library Association, Julius C. Jefferson Jr., said that libraries, at their core, uphold the principles of our democracy: intellectual freedom, First Amendment rights, and a commitment to serving all people. He stated, "[The library offers the best of who we are, and who we aspire to be as Americans.](#)"

On March 14th, [Executive Order 14238](#) was signed. It states that the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) should be reduced by the maximum extent permitted by law. On March 31, all IMLS staff were placed on leave.

The IMLS is the federal institution that routes federal funding to states for further distribution to libraries, and to individual libraries and museums through grant programs. IMLS awarded [\\$266 million in grants and research funding last year](#). For reference, this program makes up less than 0.003% of the [federal budget](#).

In Massachusetts, IMLS funding is entrusted to the [Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners](#) (MBLC), which uses this funding to license databases which are accessible to every public and school library in the state. [Per the MBLC](#), school libraries account for 60% of the use of these databases. Last year, there were over 9 million full text downloads from these databases in Massachusetts. If you have used Gale databases, ProQuest databases, or Britannica Online at the library or at school, you have benefited from IMLS funds. State funding is being increased for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, but even with this increase, the funding for these databases will be reduced from \$2.8 million to \$1.17 million, resulting in 21 out of 27 databases being discontinued.

The MBLC also uses IMLS funding to support the Commonwealth Catalog (ComCat), which helps libraries share materials across the entire state. Each month, 7,500 items are shared through this system. Our library network, CW MARS, also benefits from IMLS funding. If you use Libby to borrow eBooks or eAudiobooks, some of the annual fees for administering that platform are paid through IMLS funding. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts will be funding ComCat and Libby during FY2026, but after that, the future of these important services is uncertain.

If you are interested in learning more about this issue and how you can help, here are some helpful resources:

### **Text of Executive Order 14238**

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy>

### **Statements from library organizations**

#### ***American Library Association***

<https://www.ala.org/news/2025/03/ala-statement-white-house-assault-institute-museum-and-library-services>

#### ***Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners***

<https://mblc.state.ma.us/federal-cuts.php>

#### ***New England Library Association***

<https://bit.ly/3RwtYf7>

### **Coverage by national media outlets**

#### ***CBS***

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/imls-museums-libraries-administrative-leave>

#### ***Fox News***

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-undoes-stack-harmful-biden-executive-orders-shrinks-multiple-agencies>

#### ***NPR***

<https://www.npr.org/2025/03/31/nx-s1-5334415/doge-institute-of-museum-and-library-services>

### **Coverage by local media outlets**

#### ***The Bedford Citizen***

<https://thebedfordcitizen.org/2025/03/bedford-library-could-face-funding-cuts>

#### ***WBUR***

<https://www.wbur.org/news/2025/04/02/massachusetts-library-services-threatened-by-trump-funding-cuts>

### **Other**

#### ***A Brief History of National Support for Libraries in the United States***

<https://www.ifla.org/past-wlic/2012/140-farrell-en.pdf>

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If you want to make your voice heard, you can sign one of the petitions below, and/or you can contact your federal or state representatives directly.

EveryLibrary Petition

<https://action.everylibrary.org/eoimls2025>

Show Up For Our Libraries (ALA)

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/show-up-for-our-libraries>

Federal Legislators: FIND YOUR MEMBER

<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

State Legislators: FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR

<https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator>

Respectfully,

*The Lawrence Library Board of Trustees*

June 4, 2025