STATE AID TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

History of State Aid to Public Libraries

1890 Enactment of the Act to Promote the Establishment and Efficiency of Public Libraries (c.347, Acts of 1890, codified as M.G.L. c.78, s.16-20). This established the Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission as the country’s first state library development agency and authorized the nation’s first state aid to public libraries program. The aid was in the form of one hundred dollars worth of books to every town establishing a free public library, appointing a board of trustees, providing a facility and establishing an appropriation of local funds.

1956 The Report of State Aid to Public Libraries, commonly known as the Buck Report was presented to the legislature. One of the recommendations made by the Buck Report was that “a grant-in-aid be made to each public library meeting minimum standards of service.”

1960 M.G.L. c.78, s.16-18 were repealed by c.429, s.5, Acts of 1960. Sections 16-18 related to money awarded by the Board of Library Commissioners for the purchase of books in towns having no public library (16), the requirement that the town receiving the books have an elected board of trustees and that those trustees have made provisions for the care and distribution of the books (17), and a municipal appropriation requirement for towns (18).

1960 Governor Furculo signed a bill establishing State Aid to Public Libraries (c.760, Acts of 1960, codified as M.G.L. c.78, s.19A and 19B).

1961 The first State Aid to Public Libraries awards, totaling $974,443, were distributed to 237 municipalities that met minimum standards of public library service.

1964 Funding for State Aid to Public Libraries was changed from state income tax revenue to the general fund (c.672 Acts of 1963).

1970 An amended State Aid to Public Libraries bill provided for an increase in the size of State Aid awards, but funds were not appropriated for the bill (c.636, s.1, 2, 5 Acts of 1970).

1972 Funds were appropriated for the 1970 State Aid to Public Libraries bill.

1974 A regulation was adopted as part of the minimum standards of public library service that required, by July 1, 1979, that a public library "must be willing to lend its books to any other free public library also accepting a state grant ... [and] that all public Libraries participating in the direct state aid grant program must be willing, on a reciprocal basis, to extend direct access and services to nonresidents who are card holders in other Libraries participating in the state aid grant program." (605 CMR 4.01(6)).

1981 An amended State Aid to Public Libraries bill increased the amount of State Aid to Public Libraries awards (c.99, Acts of 1980).
1986 Governor Dukakis signed the FY1987 state budget which established the Municipal Equalization Grant for one year (FY1987) with an appropriation of $3 million.

1987 Senate President Bulger filed a bill titled An Act to Improve Public Libraries, and it was signed into law by Governor Dukakis. The bill authorized the Municipal Equalization Grant, the Nonresident Circulation Offset, and established the Municipal Appropriation Requirement as a percentage increase. The Nonresident Circulation Offset portion was not funded (c.478, s.1, Acts of 1987, codified as M.G.L. c.78, s.19A (3-4)).

1992 Governor Weld signed a bill that waived the requirements of M.G.L., c.78, s.19A for any municipality that was under receivership for FY1993 - FY1995 (c.153, s.63, Acts of 1992).

1993 Governor Weld signed an FY1993 supplemental budget appropriating $1,239,025 for the Nonresident Circulation Offset portion of M.G.L., c.78, s.19A.

1993 Governor Weld signed a bill amending c.153, s.63, Acts of 1992, that waived the requirements of M.G.L. c.78, s.19A and s.19B for any town that was under receivership or under the guidance of a finance control board as of January 1, 1993. The bill was in effect for FY1993 - FY1995 (c.20, Acts of 1993).

1994 A regulation, 605 C.M.R. 5.00, defining nonresident circulation and data collection for the nonresident circulation offset went into effect on October 7, 1994.

1997 Revision of 605 C.M.R. 4.01(4), “employ trained library personnel” went into effect on January 10, 1997. The educational level required for library directors was changed to a bachelor’s degree in communities with a population under 10,000 and a master’s degree in library science for communities with a population 10,000 and over.

1999 Governor Cellucci signed the FY2000 budget appropriating an additional $1.5 million to the municipal equalization grant program and $1.5 million for the library incentive grant program, (increase to $9,899,804).

2000 “Application for flexibility,” an amendment to 605 C.M.R. 4.01(5), went into effect on July 1, 2000. “A library that is open the required hours for a larger population group may, by request of the Library Director and Chair of the Board of Trustees, expend the required materials expenditure for that population group.”

2006-2007 On June 1, 2006, the Board of Library Commissioners approved 30 appointments to the State Aid Review Committee. The Board asked the Committee to assess the role of a state aid program in improving library services through review of the current program and programs in other states, and to develop a next generation program. The Committee presented its final report to the Board on July 6, 2007.

2009 The Board of Library Commissioners approved an amendment in 605 C.M.R. 4.01(3)(5) basing the Materials Expenditure Requirement on Municipal Appropriations to libraries, and aligning population groups that determine Hours Open and Materials Expenditure Requirements.

2014-2015 On June 5, 2014, the Board of Library Commissioners approved a charge to create the State Aid Review Committee. The Board asked the Committee to assess the role of a state aid program in improving library services through review of the current program and programs in other states, and to develop a next generation program. The Committee presented its final report to the Board on March 3, 2016.
After public hearings were held around the Commonwealth, Regulatory Changes (605 CMR 4.00) were adopted by the Board of Library Commissioners and published in the Massachusetts Register. The regulations included changes to minimum hours and to materials expenditures requirements.

Two of the State Aid Review Committee recommendations to the Board concerning the calculation of the MAR and the MAR waiver were put aside for further discussion. It was considered that they would need additional discussion beyond the scope of the original State Aid to Public Libraries Review Committee. At the July, 2016 Board meeting, Commissioners appointed a task force to look at the following charge:

A taskforce of 13 appointments was approved at the July 7, 2016 Board meeting to study recommendations from the State Aid Review Committee regarding the Waiver process and the MAR calculation. Final recommendations were presented to the Board at the May 4, 2017 meeting. The recommendations keep the MAR formula as is, and institute a 5 year limit to the number of MAR Waivers.