



Statement of the West Virginia Library Association

Senate Bill 452/House Bill 2009

The West Virginia Library Association (WVLA) strongly believes that the state's library section director must possess both a Master of Library & Information Science (MLIS) degree and at least three years of administrative experience to effectively lead and manage the state's library systems. SB 452/HB 2009 proposes to amend §29-1-8c(c) to remove these essential qualifications. WVLA opposes this change and urges lawmakers to reconsider the implications for West Virginia's libraries and communities.

An MLIS degree is a critical qualification for the library section director. It ensures that the individual in this role has a deep understanding of library science, including vital areas such as information management, user services, cataloging, and the ethical use of resources. The MLIS program provides specialized training in emerging library technologies, data privacy, and information literacy—knowledge that is essential for navigating the modern landscape of libraries, where digital access and information management are increasingly important. The library section director must be equipped to lead in an environment of rapid technological change, and an MLIS degree offers the foundation needed to do so.

Equally important is the requirement for at least three years of administrative experience. Managing a large and diverse library system requires leadership skills and practical experience in budgeting, staffing, policy development, and collaboration with local libraries and community organizations. The library section director is tasked with navigating complex decisions that impact libraries across West Virginia, advocating for resources, and ensuring that library services are equitable and accessible to all. At least three years of administrative experience provides the necessary skills to oversee operations, manage staff, and drive initiatives that promote library excellence. It also enables the state librarian to effectively communicate with legislators, stakeholders, and the public to secure necessary funding and support for libraries statewide.

SB 452/HB 2009, if passed in its current form, would strip away the requirement for the library section director to have an MLIS degree and significant administrative experience. WVLA believes this proposal undermines the integrity of the office and would compromise the quality of library services throughout the state. Libraries are critical hubs of information, education, and community engagement, and they require leadership that is both knowledgeable and experienced.

WVLA urges the West Virginia legislature to amend SB 452/HB 2009 to remove the proposed changes to §29-1-8c(c) and maintain the current qualifications for the library section director. Ensuring that the library section director holds an MLIS degree and has relevant administrative experience is essential for the continued success of our libraries and the communities they serve. WVLA is committed to advocating for the highest standards in library leadership and will continue to work toward policies that strengthen our libraries for generations to come.