



Official Statement on Proviso 27.1

For the first time in several years, public libraries have received a per capita increase to our state library budgets. The legislative year is coming to an end, and we are fortunate to see the increase in per capita funding. This fiscal year the per capita increase is .25 cent increase per county, and for public libraries it translates to additional state library funding, which is critical to supporting operational costs as we serve our communities.

Unfortunately, the State General Assembly's Conference Committee approved a budget that includes the following [proviso](#):

27.1. (LIB: Aid to Counties Libraries Allotment) The amount appropriated in this section for Aid to County Libraries shall be allotted to each county on a per capita basis according to the official United States Census For 2020, as aid to the County Library. No county shall be allocated less than \$150,000 under this provision. To receive this aid, local library support shall not be less than the amount actually expended for library operations from local sources in the second preceding year. Prior to receiving any of these funds, county libraries must certify to the State Library that their county libraries do not offer any books or materials that appeal to the prurient interest of children under the age of seventeen in childrens, youth, or teen book sections of libraries and are only made available with explicit parental consent.

As South Carolina Library Association President, I have been advocating to legislators **against** the passing of this proviso. SCLA supports the time-tested policies of public libraries and the diligent work of library staff to meet the diverse needs of their communities.

Public libraries have robust collections of materials specifically for youth, in alignment with library collection development policies, all of which are approved by local library boards. Public libraries are guided by board approved policies that shape our collection, ultimately rooted in providing the freedom to read, a fundamental right of our community.

Libraries have always asserted that parents and caregivers are their child's first and best teachers, and it is the right of parents to decide what is appropriate for their children. However, while parents have the right to guide their own children's reading, they should not be making decisions for other parents' children. Additionally, library staff does not take responsibility for judging the appropriateness of materials selected by children when parents are not present as library staff defer to parents to supervise those selections.

The language in this proviso is subjective, vague, and appears to undermine local control over library policies. SCLA stands firmly with the State Library and trusts in the clarification and guidance they will provide. Attached is the press release from the State Library that explains their perspective on the recent proviso.

In light of these uncertainties, SCLA remains committed to advocating for clear and equitable guidelines that respect local governance, and will continue to serve our diverse communities across the state of South Carolina.

Angela Craig
SCLA President, 2024