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Over 100 Mayors and County Leaders Speak Out Against E-Book Publishers' Price-Gouging of Public Libraries

Local government leaders from major North American urban jurisdictions sign the Statement on Equitable Public Access to E-Books

WASHINGTON – 112 mayors and county executives have signed the [Statement on Equitable Public Access to E-Books](#), taking a stand to support fair and reasonable e-book pricing for public libraries. These leaders represent many of the largest jurisdictions in the U.S. and Canada, and together they serve over 54 million citizens.

Launched publicly in November 2019, the Statement on Equitable Public Access to E-Books was created by the Urban Libraries Council and Canadian Urban Libraries Council as a platform to unify and amplify the voices of elected officials who are calling for e-book publishers to eliminate inequitable pricing policies. In addition to signing the statement, several mayors and county leaders have commented on their strong belief in the importance of this issue for their jurisdictions, and for all communities in the digital age.

“Libraries connect all of us to knowledge and opportunity. Ensuring equitable access to this incredible resource, especially e-books and digital resources, is vital to the success of our community,” said Saint Paul (Minn.) Mayor Melvin Carter.

“If libraries are priced out of meeting the e-book needs of our residents, the digital divide will widen in our city. We must speak up against barriers to equitable e-book access and ensure libraries remain ‘free to all,’” said Cambridge (Mass.) Mayor Marc McGovern.

The Statement on Equitable Public Access to E-Books was issued in direct response to the embargo on e-book sales to public libraries implemented by Macmillan Publishers on November 1. Under the embargo policy, all public libraries – regardless of their size – are only able to buy a single copy of new e-book titles for the first eight weeks following the book’s publication. This policy exacerbates longstanding barriers to e-book pricing and access for public libraries, which have included major restrictions to

library lending by all “Big 5” publishers in the past two years, such as the introduction of licenses that expire after a limited time period or number of checkouts.

“Multinational publishers are price-gouging taxpayers and intensifying the gaps between the haves and have-nots in communities of all sizes with their restrictive licenses and excessively high prices. Most concerning is the new e-book embargo imposed by Macmillan Publishers, which results in an intentional erosion of digital equity by severely restricting e-book access for library patrons,” said ULC President & CEO Susan Benton. “By signing the Statement on Equitable Public Access to E-Books, North America’s mayors and county executives are sending a powerful message they will not stand for the extreme restrictions e-book publishers are placing on public libraries, which limit/jeopardize their essential role as engines for democracy.”

The statement reads as follows:

Major publishers have introduced severe restrictions to e-book and e-audiobook lending for public libraries, including embargoes on the sales of new titles and unreasonably high prices, which far exceed the prices offered for print books. As a result, libraries will be unable to fulfill their core functions in building educated, literate communities. These restrictions will be most harmful for populations who already face significant barriers to equitable knowledge and information access in our communities – including youth, people living with disabilities and those with limited financial means.

Public libraries play an essential role in leveling the playing field and strengthening the foundation of our communities. As digital technologies become increasingly inseparable from the ways that people learn, work and interact, the library’s unique ability to create onramps for information and knowledge access is more important than ever. There is significant, rising demand for e-books and e-audiobooks from public library users – overall, digital content circulation is increasing by 30% per year.

As elected public officials and trusted leaders in our communities, we are committed to protecting and supporting the capacity of public libraries to:

- Provide equal access for individuals to gain knowledge and become proficient with digital tools, regardless of their income, physical abilities, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, citizenship status or religion.
- Support lifelong learning and foster empathy, curiosity, civic engagement and a love of reading among community members.
- Educate community members about the rights, responsibilities and implications of their lives online, including data privacy risks when accessing online learning resources and digital content.
- Serve as valued partners to local government in advancing city/county outcomes for digital inclusion and as institutions that support informed citizens.

Our cities and counties are strongest when all individuals have the same opportunities to further their personal, educational and professional goals. Our democracy is non-negotiable. We stand with all who are urging e-book and e-audiobook publishers to institute fair, transparent and flexible lending models for public libraries.

The following mayors and county executives have signed on to the above statement:

IN THE UNITED STATES

County Board of Supervisors VP Keith Carson
Alameda County, Calif.

Mayor Ethan Berkowitz
Anchorage, Alaska

County Executive Steuart Pittman
Anne Arundel County, Md.

Mayor Steve Adler
Austin, Texas

Mayor Bernard Young
Baltimore, Md.

County Executive John A. Olszewski Jr.
Baltimore County, Md.

County Judge Nelson Wolff
Bexar County, Texas

Mayor Marc McGovern
Cambridge, Mass.

Mayor Thomas Bernabei
Canton, Ohio

Mayor Vi Lyles
Charlotte, N.C.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot
Chicago, Ill.

Mayor John Cranley
Cincinnati, Ohio

Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin
Columbia, S.C.

County Board of Supervisors Chair John Gioia
Contra Costa County, Calif.

City Manager T.C. Broadnax
Dallas, Texas

Mayor Nan Whaley
Dayton, Ohio

Mayor Michael Hancock
Denver, Colo.

Mayor Steve Schewel
Durham, N.C.

County Manager Wendell Davis
Durham County, N.C.

Mayor Drew Boyles
El Segundo, Calif.

County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz
Erie County, N.Y.

County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper
Erie County, Pa.

County Executive Bryan Hill
Fairfax County, Va.

City Manager David Parrish
Greensboro, N.C.

Mayor Nancy B. Vaughan
Greensboro, N.C.

County Commissioner Denise Driehaus
Hamilton County, Ohio

Mayor Luke A. Bronin
Hartford, Conn.

Mayor Sylvester Turner
Houston, Texas

County Executive Calvin B. Ball III
Howard County, Md.

County Executive Frank White
Jackson County, Mo.

Mayor Frank Scott Jr.
Little Rock, Ark.

Mayor Greg Fischer
Louisville, Ky.

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway
Madison, Wis.

County Manager Dena Diorio
Mecklenburg County, N.C.

County Council President Nancy Navarro
Montgomery County, Md.

Mayor John Cooper
Nashville, Tenn.

Mayor LaToya Cantrell
New Orleans, La.

Mayor James Kenney
Philadelphia, Pa.

County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry
Pima County, Ariz.

Mayor Kate Merchant Snyder
Portland, Maine

Bryan Barnett
Rochester Hills, Mich.

Mayor Melvin Carter
Saint Paul, Minn.

Mayor Ron Nirenberg
San Antonio, Texas

Mayor Sam Liccardo
San José, Calif.

Mayor Eileen Weir
Independence, Mo.

Mayor Bobby Hopewell
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Los Angeles, Calif.

County Commissioner Tina Skeldon Wozniak
Lucas County, Ohio

County Commissioner Anthony Traficanti
Mahoning County, Ohio

County Executive Marc Elrich
Montgomery County, Md.

County Chair Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County, Ore.

Mayor Toni Harp
New Haven, Conn.

Mayor Breea Clark
Norman, Okla.

Mayor Kate Gallego
Phoenix, Ariz.

Mayor Bill Peduto
Pittsburgh, Pa.

County Council Chair Paul Livingston
Richland County, S.C.

Mayor Lovely Warren
Rochester, N.Y.

Mayor Jenny Wilson
Salt Lake County, Utah

Mayor London N. Breed
San Francisco, Calif.

Mayor Gleam Davis
Santa Monica, Calif.

Mayor George Van Dusen
Skokie, Ill.

County Executive Sam Page
St. Louis County, Mo.

County Commissioner Richard Regula
Stark County, Ohio

Mayor Michael Tubbs
Stockton, Calif.

Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz
Toledo, Ohio

Mayor Bobby Dyer
Virginia Beach, Va.

Mayor Muriel Bowser
Washington, D.C.

Mayor Jamael Tito Brown
Youngstown, Ohio

IN CANADA

Mayor Jeff Lehman
Barrie, Ont.

Mayor Andy Adams
Campbell River, B.C.

District Board Chair Rhona Martin
Columbia Shuswap, B.C.

Mayor George V. Harvie
Delta, B.C.

Mayor Michelle Staples
Duncan, B.C.

Mayor Don Iveson
Edmonton, Alta.

Mayor Ron Oszust
Golden, B.C.

Mayor Cam Guthrie
Guelph, Ont.

Mayor Fred Eisenberger
Hamilton, Ont.

Mayor Leo Facio
Harrison Hot Springs, B.C.

Mayor Sylvia Pranger
Kent, B.C.

Mayor Val van den Broek
Langley, B.C.

Mayor Ed Holder
London, Ont.

Mayor Gordon Krantz
Milton, Ont.

Mayor Bonnie Crombie
Mississauga, Ont.

Mayor Leonard Krog
Nanaimo, B.C.

Mayor Rob Burton
Oakville, Ont.

Mayor Dan Carter
Oshawa, Ont.

Mayor Jim Watson
Ottawa, Ont.

Mayor John Vassilaki
Penticton, B.C.

Mayor Dennis Dugas
Port Hardy, B.C.

Mayor Gabriele Wickstrom
Port McNeill, B.C.

Mayor David Formosa
Powell River, B.C.

Mayor Kris Olsen
Queen Charlotte, B.C.

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Mayor Cliff McNeil-Smith
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Mayor Dave Jaworsky
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Mayor Maja Tait
Sooke, B.C.

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St. Catharines, Ont.

Mayor Doug McCallum
Surrey, B.C.

Mayor John Tory
Toronto, Ont.

Mayor Kennedy Stewart
Vancouver, B.C.

Mayor Victor Cumming
Vernon, B.C.

Mayor Gord Milsom
West Kelowna, B.C.

Visit urbanlibraries.org for more information about the statement and the most up-to-date list of signatories.

About the Urban Libraries Council

The Urban Libraries Council is an innovation and impact tank of North America's leading public library systems. ULC drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships to elevate the power of libraries as essential, transformative institutions for the 21st-century. More than 150 urban member libraries in the U.S. and Canada rely on ULC to identify significant challenges facing today's communities and provide new tools and techniques to help libraries achieve stronger outcomes in education, digital inclusion, workforce and economic development, and race and social equity.

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