



MINNESOTA LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

March 22, 2026

Senator Steve Cwodzinski
Chair, Senate Education Policy Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota State Bldg., Room 3207
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Library eBooks

Chair Cwodzinski and members of the Senate Education Policy Committee,

Thank you for including this important legislation and for recognizing the urgent need to address fair eBook access in Minnesota. The Minnesota Library Association deeply appreciates your attention to this issue, which directly impacts readers, students, educators, and lifelong learners across our state. The proposed eBook legislation offers a practical, fiscally responsible solution that strengthens access, improves transparency, and ensures that taxpayer dollars are used wisely.

Minnesota libraries are facing significant and growing challenges in providing equitable digital access. Unlike print books, which libraries purchase once and own permanently, we must lease eBooks at prices three to five times higher than consumers pay, and those licenses often expire after only two years or 26 checkouts. This results in taxpayer dollars being used for short-term rentals instead of long-term community assets. Rising costs, nondisclosure agreements, and the inability to share digital materials through interlibrary loan further limit our ability to meet community needs.

These challenges have real consequences for Minnesotans. High eBook prices reduce access in communities across the state, especially for patrons who rely on digital materials for accessibility, including individuals with visual or reading impairments and students with IEPs or 504 Plans. Many school libraries depend on public library digital collections because they cannot afford their own, leaving students waiting for essential resources. Even with significant investment, such as the \$6.5 million metro libraries spent on digital materials in 2025, demand continues to exceed supply by tens of millions of dollars.

It is also important to note that current pricing practices do not meaningfully benefit authors. Vendors take substantial fees, publishers retain most of the remaining revenue, and authors receive the smallest share across all formats. Libraries and authors have shared interests because libraries drive discovery, increase overall reading, and help connect readers to writers whose work they later purchase. A fair and sustainable library eBook market strengthens the entire book ecosystem, including authors, bookstores, and publishers.

Connecticut has adopted practical contract-based approaches to ensure fair, transparent, and reasonable eBook licensing terms for publicly funded libraries. The important language included in this bill is modeled on the Connecticut approach and focuses on how publicly funded libraries may license and lend eBooks, restores local control, enhances transparency, protects patron privacy, and ensures that libraries have fair and reasonable options when licensing digital materials. These measures improve access without altering copyright law and while respecting the essential value of creative work.

Thank you again for including this legislation and for your commitment to equitable access, responsible stewardship of public funds, and the strength of Minnesota's library and reading ecosystem. Supporting fair eBook access supports our students, our communities, and the authors and creators who enrich our state.

Sincerely,

Liza Shafiq
President, MLA

Sarah Hawkins
Legislative Chair, MLA