

# STATE OF NEW YORK

5494

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

February 21, 2025

Introduced by Sen. BYNOE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Libraries

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to state aid for library social work services; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon the expiration thereof

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 273-b  
2 to read as follows:

3 § 273-b. State aid awards for library social work services. 1. It is  
4 the intent of this legislature to place social workers in libraries to  
5 assist people who need access to greater resources and social services  
6 assistance than what is currently available at a library without a  
7 social worker. Libraries are friendly, hospitable, and restful public  
8 spaces where people from a wide variety of backgrounds and all walks of  
9 life gather to learn, connect with others, and rest. Libraries provide  
10 an essential public good by connecting communities with opportunities to  
11 upskill, seek education, and learn about resources to support basic  
12 needs.

13 People view libraries as safe spaces for rest and learning, where they  
14 can receive vital services for free. Libraries offer respite for all  
15 community members, including the most vulnerable in our communities.  
16 This includes those who are unhoused, those who cannot afford to cool  
17 their homes during the summer, and those without broadband internet  
18 access. As such, libraries are often the first to identify emerging  
19 community issues as residents seek guidance and help from the library.

20 Many library patrons have needs that cannot be met by existing library  
21 resources. Many needs extend beyond the scope of work of librarians, who  
22 despite their best intentions to serve, are not trained nor equipped to  
23 meet the wide range of social services challenges being faced by  
24 patrons. These needs include housing assistance, mental health

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 services, and help accessing other social services. The co-location of  
2 social workers in libraries connects people who need assistance with the  
3 workers who can help them. Placing social workers in libraries will  
4 increase access to social services for those who need it the most and  
5 will ensure better community health and wellbeing.

6 Furthermore, by creating dedicated funding for library social workers,  
7 libraries can serve the social services needs of the community without  
8 having to pull funding from other vital services such as buying books,  
9 developing programming, and maintaining the upkeep of their library  
10 buildings.

11 2. State aid shall be provided for social work services awards, pursu-  
12 ant to subdivision five of this section, for salary and fringe benefits  
13 of social workers and social worker supervisors, with responsibilities  
14 and duties as detailed in subdivision six of this section, in public  
15 libraries and public library systems that are located in or contain an  
16 economically disadvantaged community, of such public libraries and  
17 library systems chartered by the regents of the state of New York or  
18 established by an act of the legislature, upon approval by the commis-  
19 sioner. The term social work services shall be defined by the commis-  
20 sioner in accordance with article one hundred fifty-four of this chap-  
21 ter. The state liability for aid awards paid pursuant to this section  
22 shall be limited to funds appropriated for such purpose. Awards shall be  
23 provided on approved expenses incurred during the period commencing July  
24 first and ending June thirtieth for up to three years; provided, howev-  
25 er, that such award shall be payable to each public library upon  
26 approval of the application by the department in a manner that ensures  
27 award effectiveness over a three year period.

28 3. Each single social work services award application for state aid  
29 allocated under this section that requests a social worker shall be  
30 submitted by the board of trustees of the public library responsible for  
31 the operation of such social work services award to the commissioner for  
32 the commissioner's review and approval, after having been reviewed and  
33 approved by the governing board of the public library system of which  
34 such public library is a member. Each single social work services award  
35 application requesting a social worker shall:

36 a. demonstrate that resources are or shall be available to provide for  
37 maximum utilization of the social work services award if approved;

38 b. demonstrate that such social work services award would enhance  
39 community building and expand access to social services as a consequence  
40 of approval;

41 c. be limited to one award concerning such social work services,  
42 provided that no single public library building shall be the subject of  
43 more than one single submitted or approved application at one time;

44 d. contain documentation demonstrating how the award will address the  
45 service needs of one or more economically disadvantaged communities.  
46 Such documentation may demonstrate need, including, but not limited to,  
47 poverty rates, concentrations of English language learners, low high  
48 school graduation rates, limited fiscal capacity or other relevant  
49 factors; and

50 e. provide such other information as may be required by the commis-  
51 sioner.

52 4. Each single social work services award application for state aid  
53 allocated under this section that requests a social worker supervisor  
54 shall be submitted by the public library system. The public library  
55 system shall be responsible for managing all social worker supervisors  
56 and shall enter into cost sharing agreements with public libraries, if

1 such agreement would be effective and better effectuate the award  
2 requirements as detailed in subdivisions two and three of this section.  
3 Each award application requesting a social work supervisor shall be  
4 approved by the board of trustees of each participating library and  
5 library system responsible for the operation of such social work  
6 services award application. Social work services award applications  
7 requesting a social work supervisor shall be submitted to the commis-  
8 sioner for the commissioner's review and approval, after having been  
9 reviewed and approved by the governing board of the public library  
10 system of which such libraries are members. Each social work award  
11 application requesting a social work supervisor shall:

12 a. demonstrate that resources are or shall be available to provide for  
13 maximum utilization of the social work services award if approved;

14 b. demonstrate that such social work services award would enhance  
15 community building and expand access to social services as a consequence  
16 of approval;

17 c. be limited to one award concerning such social work services,  
18 provided that no single public library building shall be the subject of  
19 more than one single submitted or approved application at one time;

20 d. contain documentation demonstrating how the award will address the  
21 service needs of one or more economically disadvantaged communities.  
22 Such documentation may demonstrate need, including, but not limited to,  
23 poverty rates, concentrations of English language learners, low high  
24 school graduation rates, limited fiscal capacity or other relevant  
25 factors; and

26 e. provide such other information as may be required by the commis-  
27 sioner.

28 5. The commissioner shall determine award amounts, including salary  
29 and fringe benefit packages, for social workers and social worker super-  
30 visors based on average salaries per region, for the maximum award per  
31 library and library system for awards that are applied for and approved.

32 6. a. Public libraries with approved social work services awards shall  
33 ensure that social workers operating under such award shall perform  
34 social work services for members of the public that attend such public  
35 library.

36 b. Public library systems who receive grant fund awards shall ensure  
37 that social worker supervisors, employed by the system, operating under  
38 such grant awards shall oversee every social worker, employed by the  
39 public library in the jurisdiction of the public library system through  
40 the grant program.

41 7. Any funds made available pursuant to this section which by April  
42 first of each succeeding fiscal year are declined by such public  
43 libraries or public library systems for any reason or which cannot  
44 otherwise be used by such public libraries or public library systems for  
45 any reason, shall be made available by the commissioner to other public  
46 libraries and public library systems that are located in or contain an  
47 economically disadvantaged community.

48 8. The commissioner shall, in consultation with the president of the  
49 state civil service commission, if necessary, adopt rules and regu-  
50 lations as are necessary to carry out the purposes and provisions of  
51 this section.

52 9. The commissioner shall submit to the temporary president of the  
53 senate and the speaker of the assembly an annual report describing those  
54 social work services awards that have received state funding and the  
55 communities to be served by those awards. Such annual report shall  
56 include the effectiveness of each approved award, the number of persons

1 assisted by an award's social work services, the type, scope, and prac-  
2 tices of such services offered by each approved award and recommenda-  
3 tions for the expansion of the social work services program to all  
4 public libraries and public library systems in the state, including  
5 specific actionable items. The commissioner shall require all social  
6 work services awardees to submit to the department such information  
7 necessary for the effectuation of such annual report.

8 § 2. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall  
9 have become a law and shall expire and be deemed repealed three years  
10 after such date.