



Legislation Text

File #: RES 22-1214, **Version:** 1

HONORING THE COMMITMENT OF LIBRARY STAFF TO SAFER LIBRARIES

WHEREAS the City Council Audit Committee's Customer and Constituent Study Report conducted by Cultivate Strategy and received by the City Council in January 2022 reported "No department in the City is more beloved than the Saint Paul Public Library...with almost universal gratefulness for its staff and operations," while also documenting elevated stress levels among frontline staff due to understaffing as well as challenging and emotional patron interactions; and

WHEREAS the above report recommended that the health, hearts, and minds of frontline staff need to be a priority for the Saint Paul Public Library; and

WHEREAS an April 2 Pioneer Press article reported a 25 percent attrition rate among Saint Paul Public Library staff, with frontline staff facing crises patrons bring to the libraries from medical emergencies to criminal behavior, and over a six-month period filing 214 internal incident reports including narcotics use in restrooms and elevators, weapons including knives, indecent exposure, and threats of violence; and

WHEREAS the Saint Paul Library Board received a presentation regarding library safety on June 1, 2022, at which it was stated that library staffing at all branches was adequate; and in response to specific questions regarding whether the restoration of Sunday library hours late in 2021, spread staff too thin, were assured that no hours were restored without adequate staffing; and

WHEREAS the Saint Paul Library Board acknowledges that Saint Paul's frontline library staff bring a great variety of professional skills, experience, training, sensitivity, empathy, and a high level of personal commitment to serve all library patrons seeking services and support; and

WHEREAS issues of concern that have been brought to the Saint Paul Library Board's attention include inadequate staffing levels at some branches - including over lunch and breaks, vacations, and off-desk assignments - to maintain a safe environment for staff and patrons, the need for a sufficient substitute list to cover these vacancies, the need for workers to assume roles out of title without compensation, and the need for prompt and timely action on incident reports and banning letters; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul City Council on July 20, approved a \$1.5M federal grant to fund the "Library Optimal Response," aimed at making Saint Paul libraries safer for staff and patrons, for which planning is about to begin for launch in six months; now therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Library Board directs library management and the Office of Neighborhood Safety and consultants to work directly with branch managers and frontline staff to seek their experience and expertise on how best to determine safe staffing levels that shall be maintained for each library location as well as develop other policies that will ensure this initiative dramatically increases public safety for all library staff and patrons; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Library Board directs library management to research and create a budget proposal to bring forward to the Saint Paul City Council to create a sufficient substitute staffing pool to fill unexpected daily staff vacancies to maintain adequate staffing levels; and be it further

RESOLVED that as quickly as possible and prior to launch of the Optimal Library Response, the Saint Paul Library Board recommends that all frontline staff are trained on how to seek alternative emergency responses from the City of Saint Paul's Homeless Action Response Team (HART), the SPPD Community Outreach and Stabilization Team (COAST), and the SPFD CARE team, when serving patrons in crisis; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Library Board directs library management that incident reports shall be promptly filed and, when appropriate, that banning letters be timely served on individuals engaged in dangerous, threatening, illegal or harassing behavior to minimize repeated behavior by those individuals; and be it finally

RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Library Board recommends that library management work with its labor union partners to form a Labor-Management Committee (LMC) with formation and training provided by Minnesota's Bureau of Mediation Services, to oversee the implementation of the new safety protocols, monitor the progress monthly, address complaints or issues that arise and provide a quarterly report back to the library board.