

COOPERATIVE LIBRARY: POPULATION REQUIREMENT

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House Bill 5977 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Edward Gaffney
Committee: Local Government and Urban Policy
First Analysis (6-15-04)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would allow the City of Detroit Public Library system to be designated as a cooperative library board.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact to the State of Michigan, but there may be an indeterminate fiscal impact to certain local units of government dependent on how much funding will go to library cooperatives due to the changes in this bill.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

In 1977, the legislature created the legal framework for a network of public library cooperatives in Michigan. Known as Public Act 88 of 1977, the law enabled libraries to take advantage of economies of scale—through group purchasing, centralized cataloging, materials acquisition, printing, public outreach, training, and automation. Every library system in the state must be part of a cooperative system in order to be eligible for state funding. There are 14 cooperatives in the state.

Under the law, there are five ways libraries serving differently sized counties can be designated as cooperatives. In addition, a sixth provision allows an existing library system to petition the Department of History, Arts, and Libraries for the designation if the library serves over 1,000,000 people. This provision was included in the law to allow the City of Detroit Public Library to be designated as a cooperative library.

Until the results of the 2000 census, the Detroit Public Library—a system having 24 branches libraries, bookmobiles, and a main library—was designated as a cooperative library, successfully meeting the criterion that allowed a library system to seek that designation if it was located in a city that had at least one million people. However, after the results of the 2000 census were tallied, the population of the city declined to fewer than one million people, and the city library system lost its designation. To ensure continued state funding, the Detroit public library joined another cooperative, The Library Network, in 2003.

In order that the Detroit Public Library can regain its designation as a cooperative library, legislation has been introduced to lower the population threshold that appears in the law.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 5977 would amend the State Aid to Public Libraries Act to specify that an existing library system serving over 750,000 people could petition the Department of History, Arts, and Libraries to be designated as a cooperative library board. Currently this provision of the law requires the existing system to serve over one million people.

MCL 397.556

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Until 2003, the City of Detroit Public Library was the state's third largest public library cooperative, although it ranked first in the number of people living in the region it served. (Geographically, two cooperatives among the state's 14 cooperatives surpass Detroit in size—the Library Network that covers five counties in southeastern Michigan, and the Lakeland cooperative serving Grand Rapids and the area around Kent County.) The Detroit Public Library was designated as a cooperative because it met a criterion under the law that allowed a library cooperative to be designated if a library system served more than one million people. That criterion was designed especially for Detroit when the State Aid to Public Libraries Act was created in 1977.

The recent tally of the 2000 census demonstrates that Detroit's population has declined, and the number of people living in the city is now less than one million. This legislation would lower the population threshold from one million to 750,000, allowing the Detroit Public Library to regain its cooperative designation, and receive its library aid directly from the state, rather than through the southeastern cooperative which Detroit joined in 2003, in order to avoid losing state funds. Because of its size and its broad range of library services (which meet and sometimes surpass those of the network it joined in 2003), Detroit should be designated a library cooperative once again.

POSITIONS:

The Detroit Public Library supports the bill. (6-9-04)

The Michigan Library Association is neutral on the bill. (6-9-04)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.