

179<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS

# H.R.19

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 24, 2024

Introduced by Mr. Pluribus (for themself,  
IN THE SENATE:

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## A BILL

To establish a program to make grants for the establishment of prison libraries.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of  
America in Congress assembled,*

### **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

(a) This Act may be cited as the “Prison Library Grants Establishment Act of 2024.”

### **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.**

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall establish a program to make grants to eligible applicants for the purpose of providing library services to incarcerated individuals in order to advance reintegration efforts, reduce recidivism, and increase educational opportunities.

### **SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.**

An eligible grantee under this Act is any State or territory that submits an application that includes the following:

(1) A comprehensive plan for how the grant will be used, including project objectives, program design, and evaluation process.

(2) Proof of the existence of a physical library at a correctional facility or the intention of creating one.

(3) Data on the demographics of the population of the facility sufficient to demonstrate a compelling need for funding, including educational level of prison population, rates of recidivism, socioeconomic breakdown of the prison population or any other relevant data.

#### **SEC. 4. USE OF FUNDS.**

Grant amounts shall be used to provide library services to incarcerated individuals as set forth in section 2, and may include usage for any of the following:

(1) Education and job training.

(2) Acquisition of modern materials and equipment that reflect the interests, identities, abilities, and languages of the prison population.

(3) Expansion of the infrastructure of prison libraries to be less restrictive, safety permitted, and more welcoming with design and decor.

(4) Hiring of qualified librarians and staff to manage the libraries, their resources, and services and serve as the social coordinator for organized activities and events, and who hold the following qualifications:

(A) Have practical library management experience.

(B) Demonstrated ability to catalogue, archive, and maintain databases and E-resources.

(C) Demonstrated ability to organize weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly events and activities.

(5) Literary training.

(6) Digital literacy training.

(7) Career readiness programming.

(8) Civic engagement programs.

(9) Restorative justice programs.

(10) Resident led programs.

(11) Health and wellness activities.

(12) Computer (including laptops) and internet access.

(13) Book discussion programs.

(14) Language services, including free English classes.

(15) Audiobooks and accessible reading materials for the visually impaired and print disabled.

(16) eBooks.

(17) Management of book donation programs.

(18) Audio and visual materials or multimedia.

(19) Artistic programming such as painting, creative writing, poetry slams, drama, or music.

(20) Financial literacy.

(21) Family literacy activities facilitated during in-person visits.

(22) Resource fairs.

(23) Making reasonable efforts towards building a working relationship with local public libraries, including—

(A) adoption of a standardized guideline for library management;

(B) sharing of resources and materials through an interlibrary loan arrangement; and

(C) implementation of coordinated organized events and activities.

## **SEC. 5. PROHIBITED USES.**

Grant amounts may not be used for the following:

(1) Purchasing food, clothes, shoes, or hygiene supplies.

(2) Payment of employee salary and benefits unassociated with prison libraries.

(3) Physical and mental care for incarcerated individuals.

(4) incarcerated individual transportation.

(5) Staff training unrelated to the library services.

(6) General administrative functions or operations of the prison.

(7) Facility maintenance aside from the libraries.

(8) Other obligations imposed on the facility by law, including establishment of maintenance of a law library.

(9) Any other use unrelated to library services, resources, and management.

## **SEC. 6. PRIORITIZATION.**

The Attorney General shall, in making grants under this Act, comply with the following:

(1) The Attorney General shall prioritize making awards to grantees that are the following:

(A) Applicants that follow local and or national standards and guidelines for library management.

(B) Applicants that add or prioritize post-secondary education curriculum to library programming.

(C) Applicants with plans for tangible, positive, and measurable impact for their prison population, including—

(i) plans for increasing literacy rates;

(ii) plans for increased secondary and post-secondary enrollment and graduation rates;

(iii) plans for development of technical and vocational skills;

(iv) plans for expanded access to employment opportunities post-release; and

(v) any other factors that the Attorney General determines appropriate.

(D) Applicants with plans for numerous initiatives to maximize benefits and services for their prison population.

(2) The Attorney General shall ensure geographic diversity as between grantees with regard to the States and territories and between urban and rural areas.

(3) The Attorney General shall establish a reporting system to monitor progress, performance, and expenditures of grantees.

## **SEC. 7. TERM.**

A grant under this Act shall be for a term of one year, and may be renewed annually for a period of not more than 6 years in total.

## **SEC. 8. REPORTING.**

Grantees shall submit annual performance measures, including library activity statistics and program outcomes, and expenditure reports to systems established by the Attorney General under section 6(4).

## **SEC. 9. CONDITIONS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—A grantee may not charge a fee to any incarcerated individual for the following:

(1) Access to physical books.

(2) Access to eBook and audiobooks.

(3) Access to computers (including laptops) and the internet within the library.

(4) Access to educational and artistic materials needed to facilitate learning, training, and or activities, including notebooks, pens, pencils, paints, and similar supplies.

(5) Printing services.

(6) Any other library services or resources.

(b) AVAILABILITY FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING.—A grantee shall make the library space available to post-secondary organizations and personnel for educational programming.

## **SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act \$16,000,000 for each of fiscal month periods 2024 through 2026.