

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE September 27, 2024

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **The Big Read Down-Fee Amnesty Program**

To create more equitable access to library materials and services, the City Council adopted Resolution 19-0772 on May 22, 2019 to amend Chapter 24 of the Dallas City Code to eliminate library fines for late items. Additionally, to limit further access to materials pending their return, the City maintained fees for the replacement and cataloging of lost or damaged items, but the resolution allows for fee amnesty events to defray or eliminate those fees.

For your awareness, the Dallas Public Library will conduct its semiannual fee amnesty program called “The Big Read Down” from October 1 – 30, 2024. During this period, library customers may log minutes read as well as other activities, such as signing up for library e-materials or participating in a library program, to earn amnesty for accrued fees. The Library has set the value of minutes read and activities completed in alignment with other large urban libraries with similar programs and will utilize our summer reading platform to track success.

The schedule for the fee amnesty program will be as follows:

- 15 minutes read = \$1.00 toward fee amnesty
- Activities completed = \$20.00

Library card holders can read to reduce their own fees or donate toward the fees of others. Minutes read that are not applied to the user will be banked for use toward fee amnesty at the discretion of Library managers. Banked minutes will be distributed to each branch library based upon the poverty rate in that area. This will make it possible to forgive library fees in cases involving lower-income families and individuals, and therefore making access to library services more equitable to all.

More than 16% of our library card holders are currently blocked from checking out materials due to fees. Anecdotally these fees cause patrons to no longer actively use their library card. The Library will continue to follow in the footsteps of library industry pioneers such as the Los Angeles County Public Library that allows patrons to participate in a reading challenge to lower or eliminate fees on their accounts. By offering an opportunity to pay off these fines non-monetarily, the Library has the potential to equitably welcome back library card holders that are blocked from borrowing materials. The Spring 2024 read down produced over 322,275 minutes read and 1003 library activities completed to forgive accrued fees allowing the library to reinstate blocked card holders.

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Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact myself or Mary Jo Guidice, Director of Dallas Public Library's, at 214-670-7803 or maryjo.giudice@dallas.gov

Sincerely,



M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira
Assistant City Manager

Kimberly Bizzor Tolbert, City Manager (I)
Tammy Palomino, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Dominique Artis, Chief of Public Safety (I)
Dev Rastogi, Assistant City Manager

Alina Ciocan, Assistant City Manager
Donzell Gipson, Assistant City Manager (I)
Robin Bentley, Assistant City Manager (I)
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer
Elizabeth Saab, Chief of Strategy, Engagement, and Alignment (I)
Directors and Assistant Directors