

# Memorandum



Date January 29, 2021

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 a fee amnesty program called “The Big Read Down” from February 1 – February 28, 2021. During this period, library customers may log minutes read as well as other activities, such as taking an online class or completing a STEM activity offered by the Library, 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 = \$17.00

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.

The Dallas Public Library has approximately 662,000 active library card users. There are currently 129,749 library card holders who are blocked from checking out materials due to book replacement fees. The Library will 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. Library systems that also provide reading challenges to eliminate fees include New York Public Library, Queens Public Library, Buffalo Public Library, and the Great River Regional Public Library. By offering an opportunity to pay off these fines non-monetarily, the Library has the potential to welcome back up to 20% of the library card holders that are blocked from borrowing materials.

Please contact me or Jo Giudice, Director of the Dallas Public Library, for further information.



Joey Zapata  
Assistant City Manager

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