



February 12, 2024

GLA, GLMA, and SGA Joint Position Statement on SB390

The Georgia Library Association (GLA), the Georgia Library Media Association (GLMA), and the Society of Georgia Archivists (SGA) stand in strong opposition to Senate Bill 390, which proposes to abolish the state board for the certification of librarians, eliminate the requirement for a certified librarian to hold the position of public library director, and would remove national accreditation from Georgia's Masters in Library Science and School Library Media Specialist degree programs at University System of Georgia schools.

GLA, GLMA, and SGA believe that strong librarians build strong communities, and certification and accreditation are key to growing a strong library workforce.

Librarian certification helps Georgia's libraries and their communities ensure a consistent level of expertise and service across all of Georgia's libraries. Professional licensure benefits Georgians by ensuring their libraries are responsibly led by trained information professionals. According to the Licensing Division of the Georgia Secretary of State's office, 85% of Georgia's librarian certification licenses were granted to graduates of the MLIS program at Valdosta State University, whose program would be threatened under this bill.

GLA, GLMA, and SGA believe in the rights of local governments and public institutions to use the tools at their disposal—including licensing and professional engagement—to attract, hire, and retain rigorously trained and highly skilled staff.

Library school accreditation is key to building a strong library and archives workforce. Accreditation requirements demonstrate to prospective students, staff, and faculty that the program meets agreed-upon professional standards that guarantee a strong level of education and training that will carry them far in their professional careers. If adopted, SB390 would hurt librarian and archivist recruitment and retention, drive Georgians out-of-state for their information science education, and damage the ability of USG institutions to meet SACS accreditation standards.

GLA, GLMA, and SGA believe in the rights of Georgia's citizens to associate, speak, and read freely.

In addition to the impacts the proposed legislation would have on libraries' and archives' ability to contribute to and learn from the library profession, SB390 would ban the expenditure of state, local, or donated funds on the Georgia Library Association. GLA is a separate 501(c)3 that for over 100 years has been committed to advancing excellence in libraries and library services for Georgia residents.

GLA has and continues to put the needs of Georgians first, and it does not take marching orders from ALA or any other organization.

Georgia's libraries are completely independent in their governance, finances, and outlook from the American Library Association. Library and archives workers at all levels have the freedom and responsibility to operate libraries based on local determination of what best serves the communities they know and love. Georgia librarians and library workers consistently contribute to the state and national conversation around librarianship, making sure that Georgia's perspective and expertise is heard and acknowledged.

Georgians are facing more and more complex information decisions every day: from locating trustworthy information to understanding artificial intelligence to routine assistance with online applications, schooling, and technology, our libraries and archives serve the information needs of millions of Georgians every day.

SB390 would deprofessionalize our libraries and undermine Georgia's ability to attract and retain competitive library staff, all at a time where we need trained information professionals more than ever.

For more information, please visit: <https://gla.georgialibraries.org/divisions/advocacy-division/>