



MINNESOTA LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

March 8, 2024

Senators Kunesh, Cwodzinski, and members of the Senate Education Policy Committee

Opposition to SF 4545, as introduced: Striking the M.L.I.S. requirement for chief administrative officers of regional public library systems under MN Rule 3530.1000

Dear Chair Cwodzinski, and members of the Senate Education Policy Committee

The Minnesota Library Association (MLA) and the Council of Regional Public Library System Administrators (CRPLSA) share deep concerns regarding the blunt disregard for the requirement that chief administrative officers of regional library systems have a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree. Our concern is that this proposal will deeply impact the effectiveness of public libraries statewide, as well as contradict current legislation supporting and strengthening libraries.

The unintended consequences of this proposal, if it were to pass, would be potentially devastating to Minnesota public libraries. Regional public library boards would now be able to hire candidates who lack understanding of the basic fundamentals of librarianship, including intellectual freedom issues, without a safeguard to protect the integrity of the library, library collections, and the community’s access to library materials, which are the very issues you’re considering as you look at prohibitions on the banning of library materials.

It is imperative that library directors and branch managers in smaller communities have access to a system director who can offer guidance on complex library issues. These issues are often rooted in the fundamentals of a MLIS degree. The accreditation of the degree assures that system directors are working under a shared vocabulary and shared understanding of how libraries function and provide the best library services to the communities served.

We understand the desire of the MELSA Board of Trustees to expand their leadership search beyond the current requirements of the Rule in question. However, their goals could be achieved through legislative action allowing the MDE Commissioner to issue a time-limited waiver, 48 months for instance, as MELSA begins their search for a new Executive Director, instead of a wholesale repeal of the Rule, impacting every library in the state. In the interest of protecting libraries, their collections, and their ability to operate effectively, we strongly advocate against this bill as introduced.

Sincerely,

<i>Jodi Grebinoski</i>	<i>Sarah Hawkins</i>	<i>Liz Lynch</i>	<i>Elizabeth Hoffman</i>
MLA President	MLA Legislative Co-Chair	MLA Legislative Co-Chair	Chair, CRPLSA
Library Director	Assistant Director	Executive Director	Director
Virginia Public Library	Anoka County Library	Lake Agassiz Regional Library	Plum Creek Library System