

# **MISSISSIPPI LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

## ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

### **“Mississippi Library Association Responds to HB 1523 with Resolution”**

**Mississippi Library Association**

**Contact:** Molly McManus

**Jackson, MS:** On Friday, May 6 the MLA Executive Board responded to the passage of House Bill 1523 by approving a resolution reaffirming that the role of Mississippi is to provide service to all community members. The resolution opposes potential discrimination or bias protected by the Mississippi Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act. Molly McManus, President of the Mississippi Library Association stated, “There has been a good deal of debate about exactly what this new law does and does not do. However, since many of our members expressed concern that the law legalizes certain types of discrimination, we decided that this was a good opportunity to clearly state where libraries stand on equal treatment of all patrons.”

Resolution text below:

RESOLUTION on 2016 Mississippi Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act

Adopted by the Executive Board of the Mississippi Library Association

May 6, 2016

Whereas the Mississippi Library Association, a nonprofit professional association, is committed to the ethical principles to provide equitable service policies and access to accurate, unbiased resources; and to

distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with the provision of access to library services;

Whereas the Mississippi Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act includes the provision that public employees may engage in speech or expressive conduct based upon their sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions related to marriage, sexuality, and gender; and

Whereas speech or expressive conduct by library employees that is directed at library users based on a user's marriage status, sexuality, or gender could deter library users from seeking access to information services in Mississippi's publicly funded public, school, community college, or university libraries; now, therefore be it resolved, that the Mississippi Library Association (MLA):

1. reaffirms the role of librarians to provide service to all of our community members without discrimination or bias and to distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties;
2. opposes the Mississippi Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act on the basis that it contradicts the fundamental values of the library community to provide unbiased and courteous responses to all requests for information services; and
3. supports library environments that are safe and welcoming for all.

The mission of the Mississippi Library Association is to provide professional leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.

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