



July 17, 2019

Mayor Troy Hill and City Council Members
City of Leander
201 N. Brush Street
Leander, TX 78641

Dear Mayor Hill and Council Members,

Today's public libraries are centers of community life. They provide space and opportunities for people of all ages to discover and follow their passions, to connect with new ideas, and to find the support and resources needed to pursue their education and achieve career goals. Public libraries are also engines of economic growth, providing \$1.6 billion in services, and a \$4.64 return for every one dollar invested by the community.

The Leander Public Library is a welcoming gathering space for the cultural and civic life of the growing, diverse community. Hosting more than 900 programs and activities attended by around 14,000 people, with an estimated 150,000 visitors annually, it is clear that the residents of the city recognize the value of their public library.

As the council considers updates to the library's programming and meeting/study room policies, we would like to share a few concerns:

Internal Staff Policies/Programming Policy

All outside presenters will either be accredited as a speaker through the Central Texas Library Association, or will need to undergo a city background check.

The correct name of the organization is Central Texas Library System (CTLS). While CTLS does maintain a Texas Library Presenters list which is used by public libraries across the state, it is not an accredited list. The CTLS Performers list is created from positive recommendations by member public libraries. There is no vetting process for performers who appear on the list by CTLS, Inc. or its staff.

*We recommend changing **accredited** to **included** and restating to read **However, all outside presenters will be included as a speaker on the Central Texas Library System Texas Library Presenters list.***

While many public libraries do require background checks for volunteers and outside presenters who work directly with children in the library, requiring any outside presenters who are not on the CTLS list to undergo a background check seems onerous and contrary to the library's goal to be a welcoming gathering space for the community. For example, if the local League of Women Voters is offering a program on civic engagement presented by their current president, asking for a background check might mean that the group would seek another location for its program.

We recommend removing this requirement, or modifying to more narrowly define when background checks are required.

Meeting Room Use Policy/Security of Premises or Participants during Use

Within seven working days after a reservation request is submitted, the Library Director shall review and apprise the individual or group of concerns related to such activity or event, whether such event will need to be rescheduled or cancelled, and whether it is anticipated that additional security will be needed to facilitate the activity or event.

The proposed policy does not specify what standards will be used to determine if the event is to be rescheduled or cancelled, and if additional security will be needed; or include an appeal process. The language in this section, particularly - *Providing a physical presence or any form of surveillance so as to deter or otherwise discourage something from happening or to provide protection or information if something does happen* – is extremely vague. “Something” might happen at any event, an attendee might have a heart attack, for example.

Is this proposed policy consistent with those applied to other city venues where outside organizations host events?

In today’s knowledge and information-based economy, free and open access to information and continued learning is essential. It is critical that policies do not inadvertently create barriers to use, or significantly impede the library’s ability to provide valuable services and resources.

Sincerely,



Cecilia Barham
TLA President



Joe Dahlstrom
Interim Executive Director