March 2, 2026

Subject: Testimony in Support of S 2525 AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS -- LIBRARY EBOOK CONTRACTS

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meredith Bonds-Harmon and I am the Library Director of the East Providence Public Libraries. I write in strong support of S 2525, legislation addressing unfair and inequitable ebook licensing practices that directly impact Rhode Island libraries and the communities we serve.

Libraries today face significant barriers in acquiring digital materials. Many publishers charge libraries three to ten times the consumer price for the same ebook. Licenses often expire after 24 months or after a limited number of checkouts, requiring libraries to repurchase titles repeatedly. In some cases, ebooks are not made available to libraries at any price. These practices make it difficult for libraries to meet their core mission of providing equitable access to information.

The East Providence Public Library operates within a strict budget and has little bargaining power to negotiate licensing terms. As a result, public funds are spent on contracts that limit access, restrict preservation, and undermine our ability to build a collection.

East Providence Public library cardholders have a great appetite for ebooks. In the six month period from July through December of 2025 1,200 borrowers checked out over 5,650 digital titles EACH MONTH.

S 2525 offers a thoughtful and legally grounded solution by relying on Rhode Island consumer protection law to regulate unfair contract terms. The legislation seeks to ensure equitable licensing agreements, preserve the utility of literary materials in digital formats, and protect the confidentiality of patron records. It also provides meaningful remedies by allowing courts to deem unconscionable or deceptive contract provisions unenforceable.

This legislation supports libraries' ability to serve all residents fairly and responsibly. I respectfully urge you to advance S 2525.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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