

EXHIBIT 13
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SB 129



Polson City Library

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Chairman Noenning and Members of the Committee:

My name is Marilyn Trosper and I am the Director of the Polson City Library. I am here today to ask for your support of SB129 to clarify public library district law.

The Polson City Library Board of Trustees strongly believes Polson City Library needs a more stable funding base. Polson City Library was created in 1910 through MCA 22-1-303 as a city library. It is supported by public tax dollars obtained through the General Funds of the City of Polson and Lake County. Funding through these two General Funds is tenuous and despite the public funding provided, in order to meet the library service needs of local citizens, a sizable portion of our annual budget must and does come in the form of contributions, memorials, grants, etc.

In order to secure a stable funding base, we have been actively pursuing the creation of a public library district as a solution. We are thankful that with the passage of MCA 22-1-701 through 22-1-711 (Public Library Districts) the previous Legislature created a means by which city and county libraries could have the option of participating in a public library district. Unfortunately, the current district law does not facilitate inclusion of a city library in the initial formation of a public library district. The public library district must already be in existence before a city can choose to be included within the boundaries of the proposed district. Thus, our Polson residents cannot be part of the process of establishing a public library district even though the boundaries of a proposed district could, for example, be drawn to only include the city limits of Polson and a small segment of the surrounding county area.

For the past three years, we have tried to encourage other public libraries in the county to consolidate either as county libraries or as part of a countywide public library district but have been unsuccessful in our efforts. Two out of three of our patrons reside outside the city limits of Polson while 80% of the public funding comes from the City. Lake County's General Fund annual contribution to the Polson City Library has remained the same since 1992. SB129 will afford Polson City residents the opportunity to choose to have the Polson City Library participate in the creation of a public library district and thus, stabilize library funding and ensure quality library services to the citizens we serve.

SB129 also recognizes public library districts as a type of public library. This is not only important but it is logical, reasonable, and consistent with existing state law. It enables a public library district to be eligible for state aid and to establish a depreciation reserve fund. Polson City Library currently has and uses these two benefits.

Furthermore, allowing public library district boards to hold title to property for library purposes is significant. Once a Polson Library District is in place, ownership of our building will be determined. Public library district boards need to have the authority to own and hold title to the property that they control.

Polson City Library looks forward to being the first city library in Montana to take advantage of the clarified public library district law as outlined in SB129. Please support SB129 and the clarifications it seeks to establish. Thank you for your time today.