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**DATE:** October 16, 2026  
**TO:** RAILS Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Monica Harris, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** 8.2 Board Statement in Support for School Libraries and School Librarians

After discussion at their August and October meetings, the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee has voted in favor of recommending the RAILS Board to adopt an updated RAILS Statement of Support for School Libraries and School Librarians. This statement would replace the [2023 RAILS Statement on School Library Programs Staffed by Licensed School Librarians](#). This statement, a joint statement originally created and approved by the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), is currently used as a comment when RAILS is asked about its position on school library staff by media.

The Illinois Heartland Library System also approved a resolution in support of school libraries on September 22, 2026 (you can review the statement on the [RAILS School Library Advocacy](#) page under Statements of Support), and we have incorporated some of their language and ideas in this updated RAILS draft as well.

# RAILS Statement of Support for School Libraries and School Librarians

The Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) Board of Directors affirms that strong, sustainable school library programs, led by licensed school librarians and supported by qualified library personnel, are essential to student learning.

Licensed school librarians and other qualified library professionals bring specialized expertise in children's and young adult literature, information literacy, research, technology, collection development, and instructional collaboration. This expertise strengthens the educational mission of every school. Equitable access to well-supported school libraries matters for all students, and especially for those in rural, economically disadvantaged, and underserved communities.

The State of Illinois recognizes the important role of school libraries through the School District Library Grant Program, which provides funding to qualifying school library programs.

The RAILS Board therefore encourages Illinois school districts to employ licensed school librarians and other appropriately qualified library personnel and to invest in their ongoing professional development. The Board further encourages districts to provide adequate funding, staffing, and instructional support for school libraries, and to recognize qualified school librarians as essential partners in teaching and learning.

On behalf of its more than 540 school library members, RAILS will continue to support school libraries and their personnel through professional development, networking, shared resources, advocacy, and collaboration with partner organizations.