



## **Fine Free Pilot Program**

**CAMBRIDGE, MA, August 10, 2020** -- The City of Cambridge is pleased to announce a pilot program at the Cambridge Public Library to eliminate overdue fines for the late return/renewal of materials and the elimination of loss/damaged item fees for children's and young adult's materials. The elimination of Library fines will ensure equitable access to the great resources offered by the Library.

"The Cambridge Public Library is a critical source for books and online resources for our residents," said Louis A. DePasquale, Cambridge City Manager. "Now more than ever, we need to ensure that all members of the public have easy access to our library services."

Cambridge Public Library has long been fine free for children's and young adult materials. The new pilot will extend that policy to late adult materials and to lost or damaged children's and young adult materials. The Library has not been assessing any fines during the COVID-19 health crisis. The one-year pilot will officially begin when library services return to normal post-COVID to allow for a review period.

Research has shown that low-income families identify fines as a barrier to their use of libraries and that there is no significant difference in overdue rates between libraries that charged fines and those that did not. Fines and fees also disproportionately impact low-income families and neighborhoods. In January 2020, fines and fees in excess of \$10 led to over 5,700 patrons being blocked from library use in Cambridge.

"Our public libraries serve a vital role for our residents, particularly for our vulnerable communities," said Cambridge Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui, "We know that these fines provide a barrier to low-income families and disproportionately affect low-income neighborhoods. By removing these fines, I am hopeful that all of our residents can enjoy the magic of books at Cambridge public libraries without the fear of overdue fines."

"Our strategic plan calls on us to reduce barriers to access and take intentional action to create more equitable outcomes for the community members we serve," stated Dr. Maria McCauley, Director of Libraries. "I am excited that the Library, with the leadership of the City Council and City Manager, is embarking on this significant step in support of access, equity and inclusion."

The Library will continue to assess and collect fees for lost or damaged items from the adult collection and fines specifically related to our agreements with other libraries outside of Cambridge, such as the Commonwealth Catalog and Interlibrary Loan programs.

**About the Cambridge Public Library:**

At the Cambridge Public Library, we welcome all, inspire minds and empower community. We support a Cambridge where everyone has equitable opportunities to learn, people live their best lives, and democracy thrives. During the Covid-19 health crisis, we are offering a variety of programs and services. [Visit our website](#) to learn the details.

**Media Contact:**

Muna Kangsen, Manager of Communications, Programs and Events

Office: 857-235-9809

Mobile: 617-461-3708

Email: [mkangsen@cambridgema.gov](mailto:mkangsen@cambridgema.gov)