



# City of Philadelphia

City Council  
Chief Clerk's Office  
402 City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

**BILL NO. 240672**

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**Introduced September 5, 2024**

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**Councilmember Bass**

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**Referred to the  
Committee on Law and Government**

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## **AN ORDINANCE**

Amending the Philadelphia Code to add to Chapter 15-500, entitled "Libraries," a new section entitled "Book Sanctuaries" to ensure unrestricted access to books and information and to protect against censorship, all under certain terms and conditions.

### Legislative Intent:

WHEREAS, Philadelphia Public Libraries have long stood as indispensable pillars of our community and are committed to upholding the fundamental principles of freedom of expression and the right to access information amongst a vast spectrum of viewpoints, cultures, and ideas; and

WHEREAS, Challenges related to book censorship and the banning of literature have surged across the nation, resulting in a diminished availability of essential works that contribute to a comprehensive education and preservation of democratic values; and

WHEREAS, Every individual should have the opportunity to engage with diverse and thought-provoking content, furthering the intellectual and cultural vibrancy of our society, now therefore:

*THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HEREBY ORDAINS:*

Section 1. Chapter 15-500 of The Philadelphia Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

*§15-503. Book Sanctuaries*

*(1) Definitions*

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*(a) Book Sanctuary. A designated library or section of a library within the Free Library of Philadelphia system that is officially recognized as a safe, neutral space dedicated to the unrestricted access to books and information.*

*(b) Free Library of Philadelphia System. The network of libraries operated by the Free Library of Philadelphia, including all branch locations and associated facilities.*

## *(2) Designation of Book Sanctuaries*

*(a) Designation Process. All libraries and branches within the Free Library of Philadelphia system are hereby designated as Book Sanctuaries.*

*(b) Signage and Communication. Each designated Book Sanctuary shall display appropriate signage indicating its status as a Book Sanctuary. Additionally, the Free Library of Philadelphia shall inform the public and library patrons of this designation through various communication channels, including online platforms and printed materials*

## *(3) Protections and Responsibilities*

*(a) Protection of Materials. All materials within a Book Sanctuary shall be protected from censorship or removal based solely on content. Any challenges to materials shall follow procedures that ensure fairness and transparency.*

*(b) Community Engagement. Book Sanctuaries shall engage with the community to promote the values of intellectual freedom and access to information. This includes hosting events, programs, and discussions that reflect the diverse interests and needs of the community.*

*(4) Implementation and Oversight. The Free Library of Philadelphia Board of Trustees shall oversee the implementation and enforcement of this section, ensuring compliance with its provisions and addressing any issues that arise.*

Section 2. This Ordinance shall become effective 90 days after enactment.

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Explanation:

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted.

Italics indicate new matter added