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**For Immediate Release**

## **Hays Public Library Eliminates Overdue Fines**

Fines will no longer be charged for overdue items at the Hays Public Library. The board in December voted unanimously to eliminate the fees.

Libraries across Kansas and the nation are taking the same action due to the fact that the mission of a library is to provide access to literature and other resources, and fines stifle that access. When patrons owe fines, many times they simply stop going to the library. Fines have been found to significantly impact library usage for children and low-income patrons.

“Overdue fines have a limited impact on patrons actually returning items on time and is counterproductive to HPL’s purpose of providing access to information and resources,” said Board Chair Katherine Wolfe.

Over the past two years, the overdue fines that have been paid amount to less than one percent of the library’s annual budget.

“When evaluating if to eliminate overdue fines, it became obvious staff time spent on dealing with overdue fines has a poor return on investment,” said Hays Public Library Director Brandon Hines. “Assisting patrons, maintaining the collection, and improving the vast number of services we offer is a much more impactful and efficient use of staff time.”

There will still be a consequence to patrons not returning items. When a patron has five overdue items or one item that is more than 20 days overdue, their account will be blocked. This means that person will no longer be able to check out items until the items are returned.

While the library is softening its stance on overdue fines, a stricter approach will be taken on items long overdue. The library board has also directed staff to secure the services of a debt collections company. The specialized collections company works solely with libraries and will help the library recover fees for

items that are considered lost, which means they are overdue by at least 30 days. After 45 days the collections process will be instituted if a patron has a minimum of \$50 in lost items. While many libraries in Kansas and the across the country utilize this service, the Hays Public Library has never utilized a collections company to recover the cost of items not returned by patrons.

The library board and staff believe this new policy will increase the number of patrons able to take advantage of all the resources the library has to offer.

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