

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7247

To establish a program to make grants for the establishment of prison libraries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 27, 2026

Mr. CLEAVER (for himself, Ms. BROWN, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Ms. SEWELL, Ms. SIMON, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. CASE, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Mr. FIELDS, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. THANEDAR, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mrs. McIVER, Mr. EVANS of Pennsylvania, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Ms. CROCKETT, Ms. JOHNSON of Texas, Ms. DELBENE, Ms. RANDALL, and Ms. NORTON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To establish a program to make grants for the establishment of prison libraries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Prison Libraries Act
5 of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.**

2 Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment
3 of this Act, the Attorney General shall establish a program
4 to make grants to eligible applicants for the purpose of
5 providing library services to incarcerated individuals in
6 order to advance reintegration efforts, reduce recidivism,
7 and increase educational opportunities.

8 **SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.**

9 An eligible grantee under this Act is any State or ter-
10 ritory that submits an application that includes the fol-
11 lowing:

12 (1) A comprehensive plan for how the grant will
13 be used, including project objectives, program de-
14 sign, and evaluation process.

15 (2) Proof of the existence of a physical library
16 at a correctional facility or the intention of creating
17 one.

18 (3) Data on the demographics of the population
19 of the facility sufficient to demonstrate a compelling
20 need for funding, including educational level of pris-
21 on population, rates of recidivism, socioeconomic
22 breakdown of the prison population or any other rel-
23 evant data.

1 **SEC. 4. USE OF FUNDS.**

2 Grant amounts shall be used to provide library serv-
3 ices to incarcerated individuals as set forth in section 2,
4 and may include usage for any of the following:

5 (1) Education and job training.

6 (2) Acquisition of modern materials and equip-
7 ment that reflect the interests, identities, abilities,
8 and languages of the prison population.

9 (3) Expansion of the infrastructure of prison li-
10 braries to be less restrictive, safety permitted, and
11 more welcoming with design and decor.

12 (4) Hiring of qualified librarians and staff to
13 manage the libraries, their resources, and services
14 and serve as the social coordinator for organized ac-
15 tivities and events, and who hold the following quali-
16 fications:

17 (A) Have practical library management ex-
18 perience.

19 (B) Demonstrated ability to catalogue, ar-
20 chive, and maintain databases and E-resources.

21 (C) Demonstrated ability to organize week-
22 ly, bi-weekly, and monthly events and activities.

23 (5) Literary training.

24 (6) Digital literacy training.

25 (7) Career readiness programming.

26 (8) Civic engagement programs.

- 1 (9) Restorative justice programs.
- 2 (10) Resident led programs.
- 3 (11) Health and wellness activities.
- 4 (12) Cultural exchange and appreciation pro-
5 grams, events, and activities.
- 6 (13) Computer (including laptops) and internet
7 access.
- 8 (14) Book discussion programs.
- 9 (15) Language services, including free English
10 classes.
- 11 (16) Audiobooks and accessible reading mate-
12 rials for the visually impaired and print disabled.
- 13 (17) eBooks.
- 14 (18) Management of book donation programs.
- 15 (19) Audio and visual materials or multimedia.
- 16 (20) Artistic programing such as painting, cre-
17 ative writing, poetry slams, drama, or music.
- 18 (21) Financial literacy.
- 19 (22) Family literacy activities facilitated during
20 in-person visits.
- 21 (23) Resource fairs.
- 22 (24) Making reasonable efforts towards building
23 a working relationship with local public libraries, in-
24 cluding—

- 1 (A) adoption of a standardized guideline
2 for library management;
- 3 (B) sharing of resources and materials
4 through an interlibrary loan arrangement; and
- 5 (C) implementation of coordinated orga-
6 nized events and activities.

7 **SEC. 5. PROHIBITED USES.**

8 Grant amounts may not be used for the following:

- 9 (1) Purchasing food, clothes, shoes, or hygiene
10 supplies.
- 11 (2) Payment of employee salary and benefits
12 unassociated with prison libraries.
- 13 (3) Physical and mental care for incarcerated
14 individuals.
- 15 (4) Incarcerated individual transportation.
- 16 (5) Staff training unrelated to the library serv-
17 ices.
- 18 (6) General administrative functions or oper-
19 ations of the prison.
- 20 (7) Facility maintenance aside from the librar-
21 ies.
- 22 (8) Other obligations imposed on the facility by
23 law, including establishment of maintenance of a law
24 library.

1 (9) Any other use unrelated to library services,
2 resources, and management.

3 **SEC. 6. PRIORITIZATION.**

4 The Attorney General shall, in making grants under
5 this Act, comply with the following:

6 (1) The Attorney General shall prioritize mak-
7 ing awards to grantees that are the following:

8 (A) Applicants that follow local and or na-
9 tional standards and guidelines for library man-
10 agement.

11 (B) Applicants that add or prioritize post-
12 secondary education curriculum to library pro-
13 gramming.

14 (C) Applicants with plans for tangible,
15 positive, and measurable impact for their prison
16 population, including—

17 (i) plans for increasing literacy rates;

18 (ii) plans for increased secondary and
19 post-secondary enrollment and graduation
20 rates;

21 (iii) plans for development of technical
22 and vocational skills;

23 (iv) plans for expanded access to em-
24 ployment opportunities post-release; and

1 (v) any other factors that the Attor-
2 ney General determines appropriate.

3 (D) Applicants with plans for numerous
4 initiatives to maximize benefits and services for
5 their prison population.

6 (2) The Attorney General shall ensure geo-
7 graphic diversity as between grantees with regard to
8 the States and territories and between urban and
9 rural areas.

10 (3) The Attorney General shall establish a re-
11 porting system to monitor progress, performance,
12 and expenditures of grantees.

13 **SEC. 7. TERM.**

14 A grant under this Act shall be for term of one year,
15 and may be renewed annually for a period of not more
16 than 6 years in total.

17 **SEC. 8. REPORTING.**

18 Grantees shall submit annual performance measures,
19 including library activity statistics and program outcomes,
20 and expenditure reports to systems established by the At-
21 torney General under section 6(4).

22 **SEC. 9. CONDITIONS.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—A grantee may not charge a fee
24 to any incarcerated individual for the following:

25 (1) Access to physical books.

1 (2) Access to eBook and audiobooks.

2 (3) Access to computers (including laptops) and
3 the internet within the library.

4 (4) Access to educational and artistic materials
5 needed to facilitate learning, training, and or activi-
6 ties, including notebooks, pens, pencils, paints, and
7 similar supplies.

8 (5) Printing services.

9 (6) Any other library services or resources.

10 (b) AVAILABILITY FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM-
11 MING.—A grantee shall make the library space available
12 to post-secondary organizations and personnel for edu-
13 cational programming.

14 **SEC. 10. CONSULTATION.**

15 The Attorney General shall consult with the Director
16 of the Institute of Museum and Library Services in imple-
17 menting this Act.

18 **SEC. 11. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

19 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
20 this Act \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through
21 2031.

○