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TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: David Whitaker, Director   
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: April 7, 2022

RE: **RESOLUTION REQUESTING A CHANGE IN THE APPOINTMENT  
AUTHORITY OF THE DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION  
FROM THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT  
TO THE CITY OF DETROIT**

Council member Scott Benson requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) draft a RESOLUTION REQUESTING A CHANGE IN THE APPOINTMENT AUTHORITY OF THE DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION FROM THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT TO THE CITY OF DETROIT.

Attached, please find our draft of the aforementioned resolution.

Attachment

**BY COUNCIL MEMBER SCOTT BENSON**

**RESOLUTION REQUESTING A CHANGE IN THE APPOINTMENT AUTHORITY OF  
THE DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION FROM THE DETROIT PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT TO THE CITY OF DETROIT**

**WHEREAS,** The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and

**WHEREAS,** Detroit established its first Board of Education in 1842, composed of mayor Douglas Houghton as its president, a recorder, and two inspectors from each of six designated wards. Subsequently, it soon became the mission of the school board to establish a public library as an extension of the education system. That same year, the board petitioned the State to allow a property tax to fund and elect a board of education; and

**WHEREAS,** More than 20 years later, after fighting for and finally receiving a sufficient amount of penal fines in 1860, the Detroit Board of Education opened the first Detroit Public Library in a small room of the Capitol High School on Griswold Street in 1865. The high school had been converted from the old State Capitol Union Building in 1863; and

**WHEREAS,** In 1873, the Board of Education petitioned the State legislature again, to authorize a bond sale of \$150,000 to fund a new library building, which was granted. A 50-year lease for the Centre Park Branch was signed and its construction was completed in 1877. The Centre Park Library was demolished in 1931 in order to build what is now, the Skillman Branch; and

**WHEREAS,** The library remained under the control of the Detroit Board of Education until 1881, when its governance authority was relinquished to the Library Commission. Local Act 314 of 1881,<sup>1</sup> authorized the creation of the Library Commission for the purpose of managing the library, including all funds, property, and employees connected to it, as well as, provide for a property tax of a fifth of a mill to fund maintenance expenses.

**WHEREAS,** The Detroit Public Library (DPL) is an independent municipal corporation, governed by a seven member Detroit Library Commission. Members are appointed by the Detroit Public Schools Board of Education. The seventh member, the current president of the Board of Education, is an ex-officio member; and

**WHEREAS,** Currently, Michigan Public Act 451 of 1976, The Revised School Code, empowers the Detroit Public Schools to appoint the Library Commission, which appears to be solely based on the historical origin of the Library and not for any administrative basis; and

**WHEREAS,** During the Detroit Public Library's most recent budget hearing, the Director of the Library expressed a need for additional financial support from the City of Detroit,

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<sup>1</sup> Local Act of the State Legislature 314 of 1881 amended Local Act 233 of 1869 The Free School Act, which authorized a free education system in the City.

for both the operational and capital needs of the Library. The City of Detroit is authorized to provide the Library additional support. However, it would be appropriate for the City of Detroit to have a greater role in the administration of the Library if the City were to pursue providing DPL with additional funding. Implementing this change may initiate the start of the City of Detroit in providing DPL the additional financial support it seeks; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** That the Detroit City Council, a steadfast supporter of the Detroit Public Library, is now respectfully requesting that the State of Michigan modify Michigan Public Act 451 of 1976, The Revised School Code, to allow the Detroit City Council to appoint the members of the Detroit Public Library Commission; **THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED,** That the Detroit City Clerk is directed to send this resolution to the Detroit delegations of both the State House and State Senate, in addition to Governor Gretchen Whitmer.