



Sunnyvale

# Options and Recommendation for Elimination of Fines on Overdue Library Materials

Study Issue # LCS 19-0167

City Council Study Session, February 25, 2020

# Session outline

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- Review current approach
- Rational for change
- Options
- Impacts of proposed change
- Recommendation
- Questions and discussion



# SPL Fines and Fees adopted by Council

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- Fines

- ◆ Fines are assessed when an item is returned after the due date
- ◆ \$0.30 per item per day, maximum of \$10 per item
- ◆ Account blocked after \$20 in fines

- Fees

- ◆ Fees are assessed when an item is lost or damaged during patron use
- ◆ Cost of item + processing fee of \$12 for most items (“billed item”)
- ◆ Account blocked after 1 billed item
- ◆ Patron is billed and blocked 25 days after due date

# Purpose of Fines and Fees

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- Library materials are shared community assets
- Purpose of fines is to provide equitable access to materials
- Purpose of fees is to recover costs for lost or damaged materials

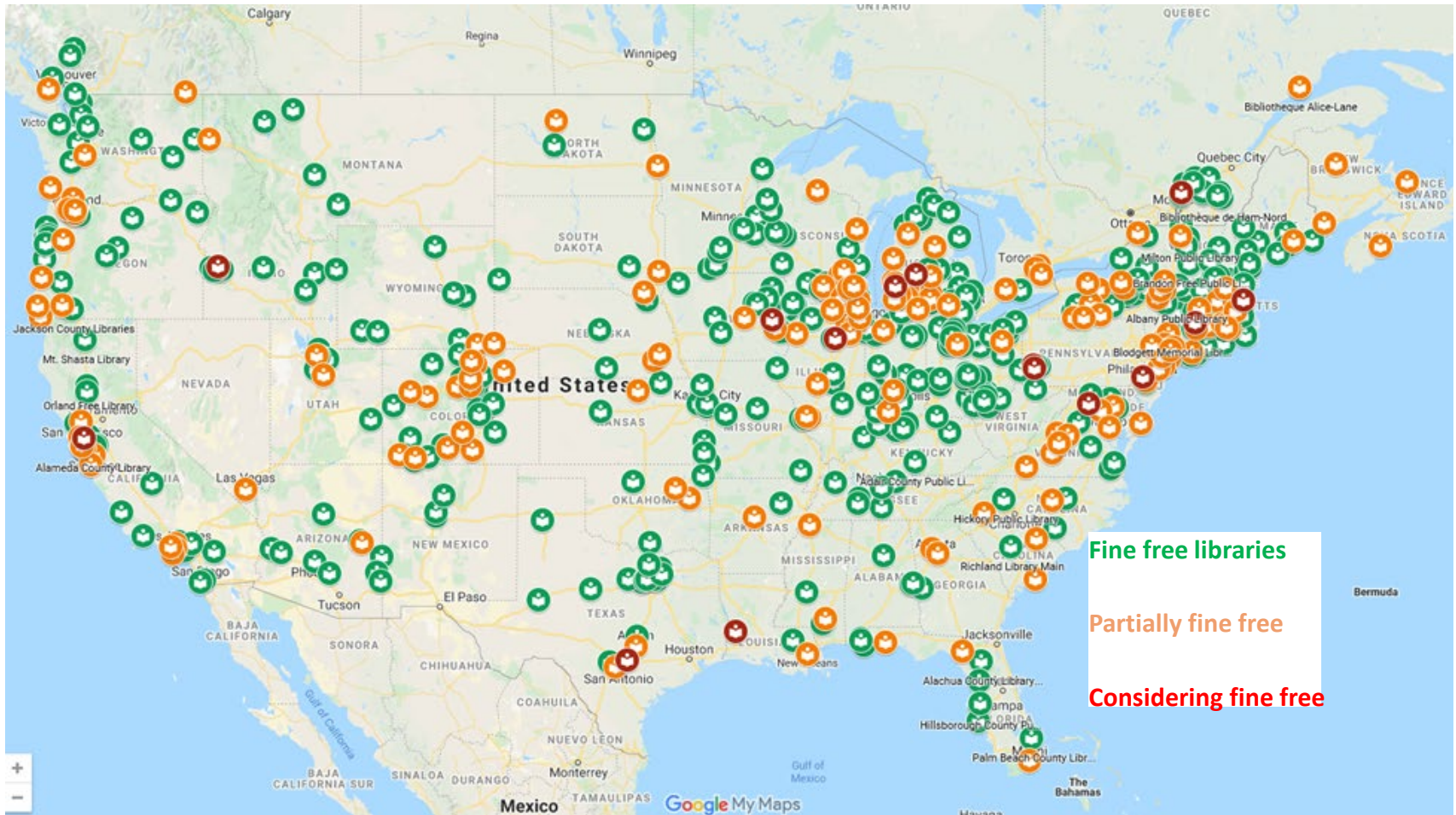


# Effectiveness of Fines and Fees Questioned

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- 2017 Colorado State Library study findings:
  - ◆ No significant difference in return rates between libraries that charge fines and those that don't
  - ◆ Small fines don't bring back, but steep ones do
  - ◆ Fines prevent low-income parents/caregivers from using public libraries
- 2019 San Francisco Public Library study findings:
  - ◆ Overdue fines restrict access
  - ◆ Fines disproportionately affect low-income individuals, racial minorities and those without college degrees

# Fine-Free Movement

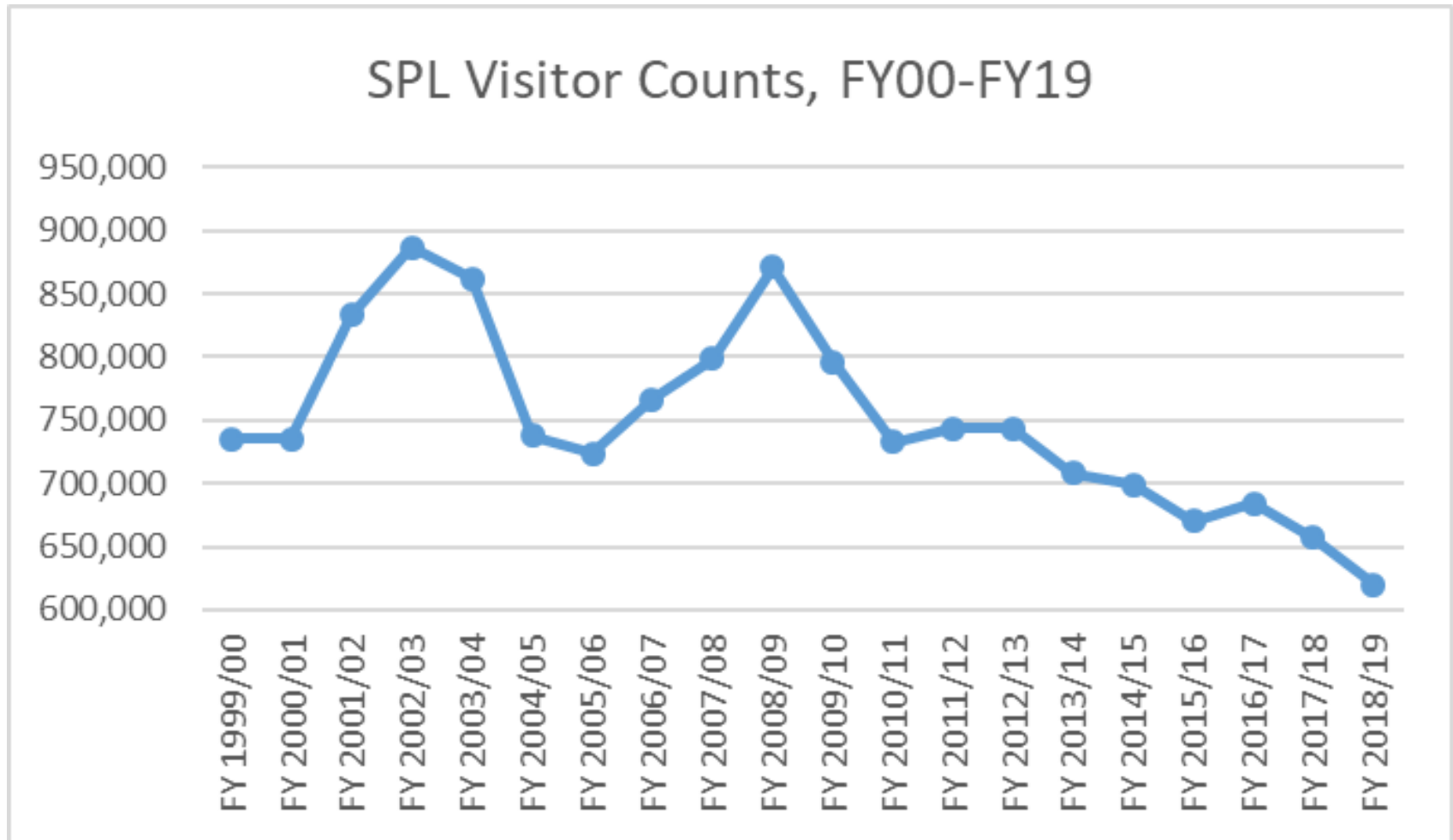


# Impacts of Fine Free

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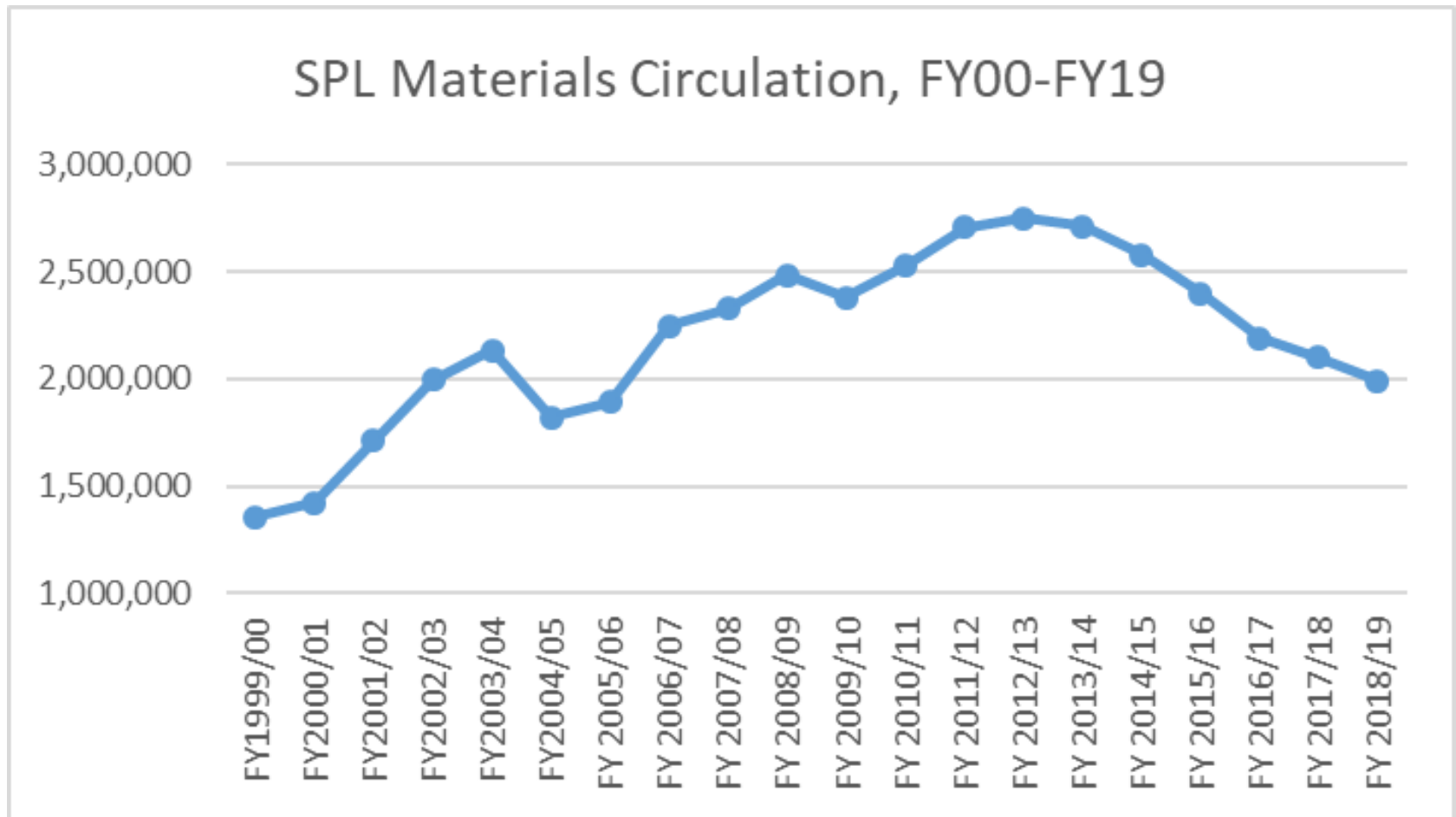
- San Rafael Public Library – 39% increase in youth borrowers after removing children's fines
- Saint Paul Public Library – Increase in library usage with highest percentages in branches serving low-income, high-minority neighborhoods after restoring 42,000 accounts
- Salt Lake County Public Library – 11% increase in borrowers and 14% increase in items borrowed one year after eliminating fines
- Gleason Public Library – No change in time people kept materials after eliminating fines
- Dayton Metro Library – Reported fewer items returned late than before policy change

# Sunnyvale Public Library Usage Trends: Visitors

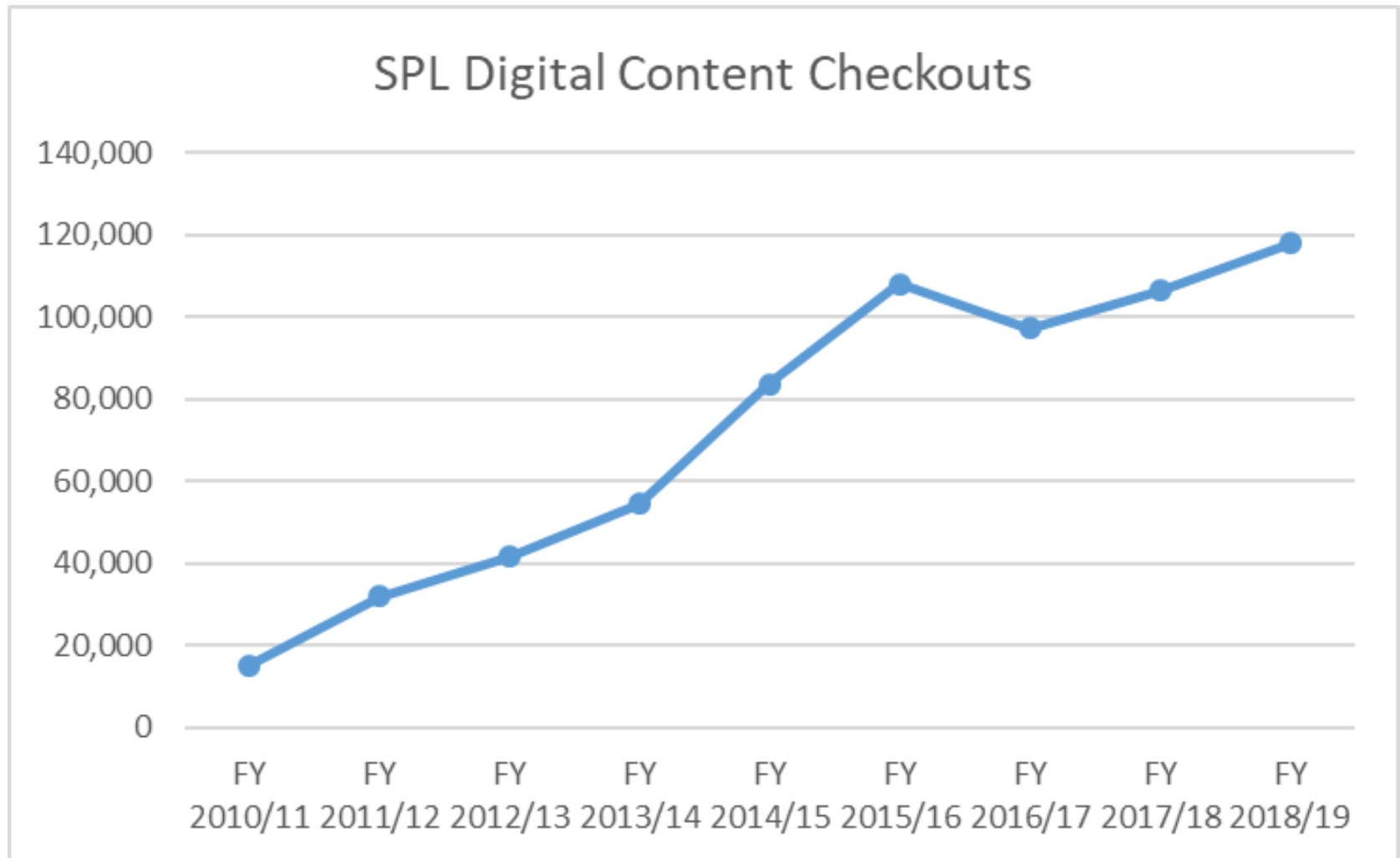




# Sunnyvale Public Library Usage Trends: Total Circulation



# Sunnyvale Public Library Usage Trends: Digital Circulation



# Sunnyvale Public Library – Suspended Accounts

	Cardholders with Full Access	Suspended Cardholders	Totals
Adults	77,697	9,523	87,220
Youth	10,225	1,371	11,596
<b>Totals</b>	<b>87,922</b>	<b>10,894</b>	<b>98,816</b>

## Sunnyvale Public Library – Suspended Account Detail

	Fines Only	Billed Items	Totals
Adults	6,932	2,675	9,607
Youth	881	406	1,287
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7,813</b>	<b>3,081</b>	<b>10,894</b>

# Sunnyvale Public Library – Patron Debt

	Overdue Fine Debt	Billed Item Debt	Totals
Adults	\$564,088	\$190,722	\$754,810
Youth	\$60,314	\$50,513	\$110,827
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$624,402</b>	<b>\$241,235</b>	<b>\$865,637</b>

# Sunnyvale Public Library – Patron Debt Over Time

	August 2018	March 2019	July 2019
Total Patron Debt	\$828,761	\$853,247	\$865,637
Total Suspended Accounts	10,107	10,442	10,894

# Sunnyvale Public Library – Patron Debt Collection

	FY 14/15	FY 15/16	FY 16/17	FY 17/18	FY 18/19
Library Revenues	\$261,116	\$271,299	\$258,022	\$211,769	\$192,005
Accounts sent to Collections	582	483	498	461	458

# Options for Improving Access

- Department Policy changes
- Fines Amnesty Programs
- Council Policy
  - ◆ Fines and Fee Schedule changes
  - ◆ Policy changes





## Options for Improving Access: Department Policy Changes

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- Threshold amount triggering account suspension or referral to collection agency
- Adjustment of dates for when accounts are referred to collection agency
- Adjustment of timing for purging accounts with accumulated debt to restore access earlier

# Options for Improving Access: Amnesty Programs

- Time-based
- Charitable giving/food donations
- Volunteering
- Reading
- Fresh Start



# Options for Improving Access: Council Policy

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- Council Policy 7.1.1B.5.8 Fiscal – Long Range Goals and Financial Policies – Revenue Collection – User Fees
  - ◆ For fees and other charges, the City Manager or the City Manager's designees have the authority to waive fees, fines, interest, and/or penalties



# Options for Improving Access: Council Policy Change

- To provide best possible service, existing Council policy could be modified to include the following:
  - ◆ *Council Policy 7.1.1B.5.9 The Director of Library and Community Services or the Director's designee(s) shall have the authority to waive Library fines or fees.*



# Options for Improving Access: Fines and Fee Schedule Change

- Elimination of fines on all overdue materials
- Elimination of fines on all children's materials



# Fiscal Impact

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- Of the \$192,005 collected in FY 2018/19, \$159,364 was payment for overdue fines, and \$32,641 for billed items
- Approx. \$160,000 revenue loss for 2020/2021 for all fines
- Approx. \$91,000 revenue loss for youth fines only



# Lost revenue replacement options:

- 5% fee increase in CS (usually 2%) generates \$180,000  
– \$100,000 needed for increased CS staffing costs =  
\$80,000 available for lost library fee revenue
- Remainder to be saved by decreasing materials purchases such as
  - ◆ Physical media (DVDs and CDs)
  - ◆ Periodicals
  - ◆ Some print
- Could be covered by Service Level Set Aside



# Alternatives

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- “Fresh Start” amnesty program to remove past fine debt
- Council Policy revision authorize Director of Library and Community Services to resolve fines and fees issues
- Amend the City fee schedule to eliminate fines for overdue materials
  - ◆ Option 1: eliminate all fines
  - ◆ Option 2: eliminate fines on children’s materials
  - ◆ Option 3: either of the above as a pilot



# Questions and discussion

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