



**HOWARD COUNTY  
LIBRARY SYSTEM**  
Public Education for All

**MEDIA RELEASE | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Howard County Library System Goes Fine-Free**

(Ellicott City, MD) – Starting August 1, overdue fines at Howard County Library System will be filed under the Dewey Decimal class 930: ancient history.

At their June 24 meeting, the HCLS Board of Trustees approved a policy to eliminate overdue fines for all materials, except items in the DIY and art education collections.

“At Howard County Library System, we are committed to welcoming and serving the entire community. Our community is stronger and healthier when everyone has access to the materials they need to pursue their educational, career, family, and life goals,” said HCLS President and CEO Tonya Aikens. “Going fine free is aligned with our commitment to equity and positions us to more fully live our mission of providing high quality public education for all Howard County residents.”

"Our top-ranked library system is a valuable treasure for our community, providing free access to unlimited knowledge and allowing all our residents the opportunity to read, learn, and grow," said County Executive Calvin Ball. "We're incredibly grateful to the Board of Trustees and CEO Tonya Aikens for taking this critical bold step to make our libraries more equitable and accessible - and for their constant commitment to encouraging life-long learning and growth for all."

All accounts will be wiped clean of existing overdue fines on August 1 (with the exception of fees and fines for items in the [DIY](#) and [art](#) collections). Items in HCLS' DIY and art collections will continue to accrue fines when they are returned late. Those collections are small in comparison with all other collections (for example, the DIY collection includes only six sewing machines or one copy of most prints), and demand typically exceeds supply, especially in the DIY collection.

Borrowed items will continue to have due dates, and borrowers will receive notices when their items are due to be returned. Additionally, HCLS will continue to ask customers to pay the cost of replacing any lost or damaged items. Visit [hclibrary.org](http://hclibrary.org) for details about fines and fees.

Prior to the new policy, HCLS charged 20 cents per day for most overdue materials and \$1 per day for DVDs and Launchpads. Each item had a maximum fine of \$6 per book or CD and \$10 per DVD. Under this fine structure, a parent who borrowed a dozen books and two movies would owe \$4.40 each day the items were late — in just one week, that would add up to \$26.40 in overdue fines. The potential for incurring a large fine for a small infraction can keep people from taking full advantage of the Library's collection, borrowing fewer materials in order to keep their fine risk low. Others choose not to use the Library at all.

*(more)*

Overdue fines account for just two percent of the Library's budget. Customers who wish to support the Library are encouraged to make donations to the Friends & Foundation of HCLS at [friendshcls.org](https://friendshcls.org).

Howard County Library System is proud to join fine-free libraries across the country. The Urban Libraries Council created an [interactive map](#) that shows which library systems have taken steps to eliminate overdue fees.

Aikens notes, "While our branches remain closed, our collections are open to all at [hclibrary.org](https://hclibrary.org)."

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