

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group

November 2023 Report to the Board

Working Group Members:

- Rajene Hardeman, Co-Chair (D)
- Debra Klein, Co-Chair (G)
- Stuart Auchincloss (U)
- Heather Blakely (U)
- George Joiner (P)
- Mark Wilson (C)
- Barry Ramage (D), Board President, ex officio
- Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS Executive Director

1. In October, Heather Blakely was welcomed to the working group.
2. The group reviewed their purpose statement and have no recommended edits at this time.
3. **RECOMMENDATION:** Policy Addressing Disruptive Behavior at Meetings – given behavior witness around the country at school board meetings and public library board meetings in the wake of censorship challenges, the working group recommends that the Bylaws, Policies and Procedures Committee reviews work done by the working group to research policies and procedures related to getting ahead of/managing disruptive behavior at our meetings.
4. **ACTION:** The working group proposes that the MHLS Board declare our system a “Book Haven System.” This idea is modeled on the [Book Sanctuary](#) movement begun by the Chicago Public Library in 2022: “*A Book Sanctuary can exist anywhere: in a library, a classroom, a coffee shop, a public park or even a bedroom bookshelf. Most importantly, Book Sanctuary owners provide unwavering support and protection for the freedom to read.*” Given this board’s stated 2023 priority to help our members defend the right to read, the working group proposes that MHLS establish a physical collection, borrowable by the public through the online catalog, featuring the titles that appear annually on the American Library Association’s [Most Challenged Book List](#). This collection would be established in the first year thanks to financial donations from MHLS board members and staff, if the board were to agree to this idea. Proposed resolution attached.
5. The Future of the EDI Working Group: The working group has spent several meetings this year discussing the future of EDI work on our board of trustees. It is recommended that the working group be extended to facilitate efforts that would result in a transition plan to further embed a long-term commitment to focus on issues related to equity, diversity, and inclusion through board committees and actions.

Proposed Book Haven System Resolution:

Whereas the mission of the Mid-Hudson Library System is to “act to uphold the public’s right to free and equitable access to information and library resources;

Whereas a core value of the Mid-Hudson Library Systems is equity, diversity, and inclusion because the staff and board believe in working together to co-create a society that is free from structural inequities; and

Whereas the American Library Association reports an unparalleled number of reported book challenges in 2022, increasing in each of the past three years; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Mid-Hudson Library System:

1. declare itself a Book Haven Library System;
2. annually commit to purchasing each title on the American Library Association’s Most Challenged Books list; and
3. ensure library cardholders in the Mid-Hudson Library System can borrow books from the Book Haven collection through the online catalog.