

[Proposal to Create A Poet Laureate of Michigan](#)

The Poet Laureate Subcommittee of the Governor's Educator Advisory Council has appreciated the chance to explore possibilities for creation of a position titled **Poet Laureate of Michigan** and is pleased to present our findings. Subcommittee members have included Lisa Rivard (chair), Ruth Rynanen and Margaret Lincoln.

Background

Our consideration of various poet laureate programs began with a review of documents provided to all GEAC members so that we could become familiar with options available nationwide and in individual states. We have summarized and compiled these materials in a single document at <https://tinyurl.com/PoetDocsGEAC>

We familiarized ourselves with a [Wikipedia state listing](#) of poet laureate programs. A listserv posting was sent out on two national school library discussion forums ([LM NET](#) and [AASL Forum](#)) to seek input on poet laureate programs. Useful responses were received from school librarians in [Texas](#), [Maryland](#) and [Wisconsin](#). We also consulted with the Michigan Reading Association and the Library of Michigan and a variety of educators across the state.

Valuable resources for a poet laureate program were also found via the Library of Congress. The following support materials were noted:

- [Library of Congress United States Poets Laureate: A Guide to Online Resources](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#) web page
- [The Poetry and Literature Center at the Library of Congress](#)
- [Research Guide for current Joy Harjo, U.S. Poet Laureate](#)
- U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, give a [memorable Inaugural Reading](#) at the Library of Congress along with a musical performance.
- [Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature](#) - The Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature at the Library of Congress dates back to 1943, containing nearly two thousand recordings—of poets and prose writers participating in literary events at the Library's Capitol Hill campus as well as sessions at the Library's Recording Laboratory.
- [Poetry of America](#) - A collection of field recordings by a wide range of award-winning contemporary poets. Each poet reads a singular American poem of his or her choosing, and also speaks to how the poem connects, deepens, or re-imagines our sense of the nation. The feature includes a print version of the poem to complement the recording, as well as a piece by the participating poet.
- [From the Catbird Seat](#) blog. A blog celebrating the Center and the wealth of literary resources at the Library of Congress, as well as engaging with current topics in literature.
- Teaching with Primary Sources posts on [Poetry](#) and [Poets](#).

Proposed model

After reviewing current poet laureate programs and considering projects implemented in the past, we came to see that appointment of a poet laureate is a practice that began hundreds of years ago as described in such Michigan eLibrary databases as [Poetry & Short Story Reference Center](#) and [Britannica School](#). It would be expected that a traditional poet laureate position could be developed by the Library of Michigan with input from a representative of the Governor's Educator Advisory Council. It is noted that we have yet to find research available to suggest that this position directly impacts our schools.

However, designating a poet laureate to focus primarily on working with schools and young people is a fairly new concept and one that could be considered either in addition or in replace of a traditional poet laureate. If a poet laureate associated with K12 schools is to be established in our state, it is suggested that this position be created as Poet Laureate of Michigan with an emphasis on youth.

Awarded by the State of Michigan for a two-year term, the Poet Laureate of Michigan would strive to raise in our youth a greater appreciation of the art of poetry, spoken word, and the enhanced knowledge of their Great Lakes State. Poet Laureate of Michigan might be timed with the annual [American Library Association Book Award announcements](#) in late January with a start date of April in honor of [National Poetry Month](#).

Selection process

The candidate under consideration would possess a genuine desire to help young people discover their own voice in poetry and spoken word as well as serve as a model representative working well with both students and teachers. The Poet Laureate of Michigan would be instrumental in establishing local youth literary arts organizations. Currently, three Michigan cities- Ann Arbor, Flint, and Detroit, are recognized by the [National Youth Poet Laureate Program](#). This program model supports literary partners in launching local youth programs, elevating the voices of young poet activists, and creating opportunities and resources to expand and elevate platforms for young poets. The [Poetry Out Loud](#) and [Inside Out Detroit Youth Literary Arts](#) initiatives may be additional resources as well as the resources found at the Library [of Congress](#).

The candidate would be given a timeline of events to include programming and presentations, readings, school interactions, etc. that would be conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the two-year term and approved by the Michigan Department of Education and Library of Michigan.

The selection panel would include representation by the Office of the Governor, Michigan Department of Education, and specifically the [Library of Michigan](#).

The selection process would include the following criteria:

- Previous experience working with youth

- Interest in the engagement and support of an emerging generation of poets and spoken word artists
- Commitment to actively promoting poetry, the spoken word, and the literary arts
- Exceptional talent in writing with an emphasis on poetry including substantial writing record and accolades and/ or spoken word experience
- Participation in appropriate background checks in accordance with school law
- Primary Residency in Michigan

There shall be consideration for reimbursement expenses such as mileage and lodging in accordance with the State of Michigan procedures. There may be consideration for an honorarium to be consistent with [other state projects](#) of similar in type and purpose.

A model example of this new position comes from [The Poetry Foundation](#), publisher of [Poetry Magazine](#), an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. The organization exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience.

It is suggested, that the Library of Michigan further explore the above model. In doing so, it is also suggested that a full-time equivalency, or FTE, is designated as a support person to develop and maintain the program as well as lead a Task Force to establish a fair and inclusive selection process to ensure the most qualified candidates are appointed.

Our conversations with the Library of Michigan have resulted in the following proposed financial request:

\$100,000 for one FTE to manage program, committee, etc. (including salary and benefits).

\$50,000 for poetry programming, festival, etc. for around the state.

\$50,000 for collection development that would allow for building of poetry collection and materials to help support Poet Laureate.

\$15,000 for honorarium for Poet Laureate to be divided into \$5000 yearly installments for three year term.

Thank you for consideration of this proposal.