



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL

RYAN DORSEY, 3rd District

100 Holliday Street
Room 523
Baltimore, MD 21202
Office: 410-396-4812
Ryan.Dorsey@BaltimoreCity.gov

February 20, 2024

Budget and Taxation Committee
Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
Sent via email

SUPPORT: Senate Bill 848: Enoch Pratt Free Library Capital Project Funding

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and distinguished members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 848: Enoch Pratt Free Library Capital Project Funding sponsored by Senator Mary Washington. The Enoch Pratt Free Library is widely acknowledged as an essential and valued institution within the city of Baltimore and state of Maryland. The Pratt is also one of the most innovative libraries in the country, adapting traditional services to meet the growing needs of our community.

However, the vital work the library is doing is hampered by aging infrastructure that has reached a critical point. The Pratt has some of the oldest library buildings in the state, and deferred maintenance due to lack of funding is leading to more building closures and emergency repairs that are having a negative impact on our community and my constituents.

In my district, the Hamilton branch library first opened in 1959. Six decades later, the Hamilton branch has never had a major renovation. There's critical problems with the envelope of the library, with significant water intrusion. The Hamilton library is a safe haven for the children in my community, with dozens of them flooding through the doors the second school lets out. Without additional funding, this building will inevitably require an increasing number of closures, leaving children with no place to go.

We're already seeing that impact at the other branch in my district, the Northwood library. Due to failing infrastructure, in Fiscal Year 2023 **the Northwood branch was closed for 58 days. That's 20% of the year!** Library staff have done what they can to keep the building cool in the summer. However, the cooling tower in the Northwood branch is original to the 1960 building. A recent building assessment found major structural deficiencies in the building, making it fiscally irresponsible to simply repair the

HVAC.

Both the Northwood and Hamilton communities deserve libraries that can provide the vital services our neighbors need. Pratt Library leaders are looking for innovative solutions to improve the sustainability of the entire library system. However, that requires investment from the state, city, and private donors. Senate Bill 848 would help the library make strides towards a comprehensive capital improvement plan and ensure access to the library for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mr Dorsey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M" and "D".

Ryan Dorsey