

MARYLAND STATE LIBRARY RESOURCE CENTER ENOCH PRATT free LIBRARY

BILL: Senate Bill 738 DATE: February, 22 2024

SUBJECT: Freedom to Read Bill **COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and

the Environment

TESTIMONY Liz Sundermann-Zinger, Chief of POSITION: Support with technical

FROM: the Central Library and State amendment

Library Resource Center, Enoch

Pratt Free Library

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagen, and members of the Committee,

The Enoch Pratt Free Library and State Library Resource Center (EPFL/SLRC) supports the Freedom to Read Bill, SB 738

The Freedom to Read Bill is simple, necessary, and non-intrusive into local control of library collections. To simplify the actions of the bill:

- Each local public library system and school libraries would be required to have a collection development policy. Such policy would require a stated process to be used when a customer/parent/citizen/group wishes to remove a book from that library's collection.
- The other requirement of the policy is that it does not allow for the exclusion of material because of the "origin, background, or views of a person who created the material," and that the library should not add or remove items from its collections "because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."
- Each school and public library would be required to follow the policy that they establish.
- If a library worker is following the policy established by their employer, they may not be fired or otherwise penalized for doing so.
- If an individual willfully destroys public library materials, the fine they are currently required to pay would increase. This fine is imposed and enforced by the library.

This bill does not in any way attempt to define what is appropriate or inappropriate reading material for the shelves of any school or public library. It merely ensures that individuals or groups, motivated by their own personal convictions, are not able to walk into a library and demand a book be added or removed from the collection without following the library's processes.

February 22, 2024

It is the job of libraries to provide materials that represent a broad range of interests, beliefs, academic and leisure pursuits, etc. Not every book will be desired by nor appropriate for every reader. Librarians should be protected from being penalized for following their own employers' policies.

Individuals should not have the ability to remove access to materials that are appreciated and needed by others. Adults and families must have the freedom to choose and read the materials that are right for them.

This bill empowers libraries, library workers, school and library boards to ensure that policies exist and are adhered to that safeguard this essential freedom.

EPFL/SLRC advocates for the passage of this bill with the following technical amendment:

Throughout the State Law of Maryland there are several places where "County Library Systems" implicitly or explicitly applies to the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore City, which functions as a County Library System. However, we have received some questions from our Board and concerned citizens that we are not included in the bill as written. We advocate for the bill to be passed with amendment to change all instances of "County Library Systems" to "County Library Systems and the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore."

Sincerely,

Liz Sundermann-Zinger

Chief, Central Library and State Library Resource Center Enoch Pratt Free Library 400 Cathedral St., Baltimore, MD 21201