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Senate Budget and Taxation  
SB358 – Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library – Funding and Budget Submission  
February 5, 2025  
Support/Favorable

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of SB358 – Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library – Funding and Budget Submission.

There are 1.2 million Marylanders who identify as Deaf or hard-of-hearing. The Maryland Deaf Cultural Digital Library (DCDL) gathers resources for this community in one, easy-to-use website. Through the website, all Marylanders have access to resources that preserve the history of Deaf culture in the state. DCDL users also have access to resources to help them stay informed, educated, and entertained through the digital collection. The staff are available to help people find the information they need. The staff also train other staff in public libraries, academic libraries, and other libraries throughout the state about the resources that are available and how to use them with their own library customers.

In Fiscal Year 2015, a law was passed in the state that requires the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) to fund a coordinator for DCDL, maintain a website, purchase and provide resources, deliver staff training, offer programs, and establish both an Advisory Board and Friends organization. MSLA has allocated \$235,000 in general funds to support DCDL since that time. It will come as no surprise that the amount that was allocated in FY 2015 is no longer able to fully support the program ten years later. In FY 2025, the expected costs for the program are estimated to be \$365,000, a shortfall of \$131,000.

Use of the DCDL's resources has steadily grown in recent years and is projected to continue to grow in the future. In 2020, DCDL ramped up its public training and programs and these offerings continue to grow as well. They include American Sign Language instruction, technology and accessibility and the importance of these being available in public libraries for people of all abilities and a virtual Summer Reading and Learning program so that children affected by hearing disabilities will have access to same types of programs other children in the state do. Without additional funding, services to Maryland's Deaf and hard-of-hearing community will suffer.

Queen Anne's County Library supports the passage of SB358. I respectfully ask for your support of this budget item, which will allow DCDL to continue to support Maryland's Deaf and hard-of-hearing community and specifically the Queen Anne's County Library users who depend on this service. By providing the proposed funding, MSLA will not be forced to reallocate funds from other programs to fund DCDL. The planned website enhancements, growing digital collection and increase in programs and training will continue, benefiting not only the 1.2 million Marylanders who identify as Deaf or hard-of-hearing, but all residents, educators, and business in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration,

Janet Salazar  
Director