



Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library - Funding and Budget Submission

Budget and Taxation Committee

February 5, 2025

SUPPORT

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Committee Members,

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) strongly supports **SB 358 Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library - Funding and Budget Submission**. The Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) is a unique and invaluable resource for the 1.2 million Maryland residents identifying as Deaf or hard-of-hearing. The DCDL is dedicated to providing leadership and guidance in offering resources about Deaf culture, acquiring and preserving an excellent collection of Deaf resources in digital formats, furnishing access to information regardless of location, and providing highly competent assistance to Maryland residents and library staff in public and academic libraries in colleges and universities throughout the state.

The law requires the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) to fund a DCDL coordinator, maintain a website, purchase and provide resources, deliver staff training, offer programs, and establish both an Advisory Board and a Friends organization. For the past decade, since DCDL's inception, MSLA has allocated \$235,000 in general funds to support DCDL personnel and other resources. DCDL expenses exceed the current budget allocation and are projected to increase. The DCDL website, the core resource for the program, functions as a digital library, resource center, information hub, and connector for other organizations and entities. The number of active DCDL website users and electronic materials available to customers has increased steadily in recent years, with website usage and demand for materials projected to grow in the years to come.

Without additional funding, services to Maryland's Deaf and hard-of-hearing community will suffer, whether through reductions in DCDL programs, staffing levels, planned website enhancements, its digital collection, or training for Maryland public library staff to adequately serve this population. In order to cover DCDL funding gaps and maintain a basic level of services moving forward, MSLA may be forced to reallocate funds from other programs, limiting the effectiveness of the agency throughout the state.

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System is deeply committed to ensuring access to information for all community members. We rely on expert partners like the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library to meet that commitment to our Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents. We ask that you **favorably recommend SB 358** for passage.

Sincerely,

Mark Winston, Ph. D. CEO