



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 5, 2025

Senate Bill 358

**Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library - Funding and Budget Submission
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 358 requires the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$450,000 to the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library; and requiring the Deaf Culture Digital Library to submit its annual operating budget to the State Library Agency on or before June 1 each year.

An annual budget is critical to enhancing the offerings of the Deaf Culture Digital Library and ensuring equitable access to literary resources for the deaf community. A robust digital platform that prioritizes accessibility can significantly improve inclusivity by providing tailored resources designed to meet the unique needs of deaf individuals. For educators and caregivers of deaf children, such resources are instrumental in effectively teaching literacy and fostering learning. Dedicating a portion of the budget to enhance these offerings in community libraries is essential to creating inclusive public spaces that serve diverse needs.

Strengthening the programs and services of the Deaf Culture Digital Library allows the provision of literature and resources that support the deaf community. Establishing an annual budget process is necessary to evaluate and address the fiscal requirements of these initiatives across the state, ensuring the library system can equitably serve the deaf community and promote broader access to educational and cultural resources.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 358**.

Thank you for your consideration.