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Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
SB358 Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library - Funding and Budget Submission
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Support

Dear Chair King and Committee Members,

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

The bill will provide necessary funding for DCDL above what the state library can provide. The Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) is a unique and invaluable resource for the 1.2 million Maryland residents who identify 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; providing highly competent assistance to Maryland residents and library staff in local public library systems, academic librarians in colleges and universities, and other libraries throughout Maryland. 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. Since the DCDL's inception in FY15, 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 have increased steadily in recent years, with website usage and demand for materials projected to grow in the years to come. Since embarking on public training and programming efforts in 2020, the DCDL has significantly grown its public programs, including American Sign Language (ASL) instruction, technology and accessibility, author talks, and a virtual Summer Reading and Learning program. 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.

Thank you for your past support of MSLA which has so far funded DCDL. I ask that you favorably recommend SB358 for passage.

Sincerely,

Dana Newman
Library Director