

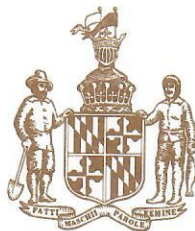
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Majority Leader

Budget and Taxation Committee

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SPONSOR STATEMENT

**Senate Bill 358 – Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library –
Funding and Budget Submission**

February 5, 2025

Mister Chairman and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

The Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) serves Deaf and hard-of-hearing Marylanders across the state and has a mission that, “All customers shall have equitable access to Deaf culture information through the Deaf Culture Digital Library in a centralized medium in the state of Maryland.” 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 Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) is required by law to fund DCDL from MSLA's Operating Budget, but no additional funding has been provided to meet rising operational costs, which now exceed their current funding. With over 1.2 million Maryland residents identifying as Deaf or hard of hearing, projections show DCDL's operating costs will continue to rise in the coming years.

The Governor's Office and Department of Budget and Management recognized the need for additional funding and supported MSLA's deficiency request for FY26, but the DCDL is still in need of a long-term funding solution. Senate Bill 358 will require the DCDL to submit its annual operating budget to the State Library Agency on or before June 1 each year and will appropriate \$450,000 annually to the DCDL.

Without this funding, there will be a direct, negative impact on Maryland's Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 358.