

Appropriations Committee**HB 660 Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding****March 6, 2026**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Committee Members,

I am writing to ask for your favorable support of **HB 660 Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding**. This bill provides necessary funding for the State Library Resource Center for FY2027-FY2032.

The State Library Resource Center (SLRC) provides a wealth of invaluable services to schools and public libraries across the state, such as the SAILOR Database Consortium, which provides access to educational databases at no cost to those institutions. These databases include Gale Educational Databases, the Heritage Quest genealogy database, and Mango Languages. Students in K-12 schools used SLRC databases 1.5 million times in FY25. Since SLRC purchases these databases at a consortium rate, the databases that SLRC paid \$600,000 for in FY25 would have cost individual schools and libraries \$4.6M.

Through its SAILOR network, SLRC provides internet connection services utilizing high speed fiber to 24 municipalities throughout the state at no cost to the recipients, including local governments and EMS services.

The Maryland Interlibrary Loan Network (MILO), administered by SLRC, provides pickup, delivery, and coordination of borrowing throughout the state. Anyone in the state with a library card to any public library can request books from any other library, including SLRC. In FY25 nearly 300,000 items were borrowed through the interlibrary loan system, leveling the playing field for all residents to access the collections of libraries across the state.

SLRC staff answered 267,704 reference questions for Marylanders in FY25, and its Government Documents were accessed over 9,000 times. Unfortunately, SLRC has had to cut their print materials budget, and some of their departments are now available by appointment only due to funding cuts. More cuts that will impact statewide services will be made without the requested funding increases.

With a collection of over 3 million physical items, including many rare and historic items specifically relevant to Maryland, SLRC is able to provide access to materials across the state that no other library can afford to purchase and maintain. This includes large collections of primary source materials like entire runs of most Maryland newspapers, government documents and genealogy resources, and a collection related to African-American history, culture and lives. In fact, Charles County Public Library customers will benefit from a traveling exhibit SLRC created about Malcolm X that will be on display at two of our branches throughout April and May 2026.

Costs for these services continue to rise, so it is vital that SLRC has the resources to continue their mission of serving all Maryland residents, students, and library professionals. Current SLRC funding is approx. \$2.75M/year or \$2.07 per state resident. The request keeps that amount the same in FY27 with slight increases each year, topping out at \$2.64 per state resident in FY32. In light of the immense scope and importance of the services provided by SLRC, I'm sure you'll find that this funding gives tremendous "bang for the buck". On behalf of the Charles County Public Library I ask that you favorably recommend SB 410 for passage.

KennethWayne Thompson, Executive Director
Charles County Public Library