

Chapter 326

(Senate Bill 358)

AN ACT concerning

Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library – Funding and Budget Submission

FOR the purpose of requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation to the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library; requiring the Deaf Culture Digital Library to submit its annual operating budget to the State Library Agency on or before a certain date each year; and generally relating to the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Education
Section 23–109
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

23–109.

(a) The State Library Agency shall establish the Deaf Culture Digital Library as the primary information center on deaf resources for library customers and staff in the State.

(b) The Deaf Culture Digital Library shall:

(1) Conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps in library services for deaf patrons and to implement strategies to fill the gaps and better coordinate library services for the deaf;

(2) In coordination with the Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, develop and provide sensitivity training for State and county library staff to help them better understand deaf patrons and their needs;

(3) Develop a website that will allow for information sharing and coordination between the Deaf Culture Digital Library and county library systems;

(4) In coordination with the State Library Agency, develop deaf–related programs and materials and share them with county library systems and other libraries in the State;

(5) Develop partnerships and strategic alliances with other entities, including:

- (i) The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- (ii) County library systems;
- (iii) The State Library Agency;
- (iv) Veterans' groups;
- (v) State and local arts councils;
- (vi) Senior citizens organizations; and
- (vii) Deaf and hard of hearing organizations, including:
 - 1. The National Association of the Deaf;
 - 2. The Hearing Loss Association of America; and
 - 3. The Maryland Association of the Deaf;

(6) Encourage partnerships and collaborations with information service providers to help provide virtual access to information and research;

(7) Form a Deaf Culture Digital Library Advisory Board to provide advice on initiatives that further advance the mission and goals of the Deaf Culture Digital Library and the majority of whose members are deaf or hard of hearing and selected from the following entities:

- (i) County library systems;
- (ii) The State Library Agency;
- (iii) The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- (iv) Statewide deaf and hard of hearing organizations; and
- (v) Other organizations as agreed on by the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the State Library Agency; and

(8) Establish a Deaf Culture Digital Library "Friends of the Library" group composed of individuals who are strongly committed, well-positioned, and able to promote community involvement, advocacy, and funding for the Deaf Culture Digital Library.

(c) The lead employee or coordinator who manages the Deaf Culture Digital Library shall be:

(1) A deaf or hard of hearing individual; and

(2) Knowledgeable and experienced concerning issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(D) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$450,000 TO THE DEAF CULTURE DIGITAL LIBRARY.

(E) THE DEAF CULTURE DIGITAL LIBRARY SHALL SUBMIT ITS ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET TO THE STATE LIBRARY AGENCY ON OR BEFORE JUNE 1 EACH YEAR.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Approved by the Governor, May 6, 2025.