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BILL NO.: SB 524

TITLE: Building Lifelong Library Learners Act

SPONSOR: Senator Elfreth

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

DATE: February 12, 2020

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** Senate Bill 524 – Building Lifelong Library Learners Act. This bill would prohibit a public library from imposing replacement fines or fees on a minor for an overdue book until 3 months after the due date, and allocates budget increases for local libraries beginning in FY22.

Baltimore County’s libraries number among its most precious resources. Libraries provide our children and students with droves of information and literature that educate, inspire, and entertain. As a former educator, County Executive Olszewski is passionate about finding new ways to introduce reading and literature into the lives of our younger generations, and reducing the financial burden on those who cannot afford to buy books. Indeed, libraries level the playing field for low-income families by providing unlimited access to a world of information and entertainment. Yet when certain books are overdue, the resulting fee can pose a financial burden on children which they cannot afford. Parents who cannot afford to cover the fee are disproportionately impacted and may be discouraged from signing their children up for the library at all. This bill would remove those fees, and increases operating support to offset losses in revenue.

The County agrees that this bill is strengthened by a compromised provision that allows libraries to charge replacement fees starting at 21 days instead of three months. This amendment would balance the fiscal constraints local library systems with the need to create a more equitable way to provide low-income children access to literature and information.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 524. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Chief Legislative Officer, 443-900-6582.