



ENOCH PRATT  
*free* LIBRARY

*Office of the CEO*

February 12, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman  
Senate Education, Health & Environmental  
Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 524 – Building Lifelong Library Learners Act  
Testimony in Support with Amendments

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

I am writing to support, with amendments, SB 524 Building Lifelong Library Learners Act. The bill is intended to empower public libraries to be fine-free for children by providing an additional \$0.40 per capita in FY22, it increases the funding for the MD Capital Grant program from \$5 to \$7.5 million, and extends increases in per capita funding for the State Library Resource Center (SLRC).

Thanks to the support of the Enoch Pratt Free Library's Board of Library Trustees and Baltimore City Government, the Enoch Pratt Free Library has been **fine-free** (for all users) since June of 2018. The amendments offered attempt to preserve the local control that made our going fine-free possible. The trustees and staff of the Enoch Pratt Free Library are very pleased to have removed this barrier to access; as expected based on national research, we did not see our return rates decrease significantly; our good will in the community has increased; and our level of service and commitment to making materials available to the community for borrowing have not been compromised.

The amendments we are requesting would leave procedural details and implementation to the highly skilled professionals of Maryland's 24 public library systems. They would leave policy decisions in the capable hands of our Boards of Library Trustees and use the power of state law to empower and fund the excellent work that libraries are already doing to make education and literacy attainable for every child in the state of Maryland.

Maryland's **Public Library Capital Grant Program** is an invaluable source of funding which the Enoch Pratt Free Library has used to address its aging building infrastructure. We are utilizing \$1.0 million in State support matched by more than \$2.0 million in City and private gifts to renovate the Hampden library which is more than 100 years old. It will be completely modernized and for the first time in its history, have community meeting room and program



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space. The grant program continues to meet the goal of geographic diversity in the distribution of awards; 23 of the State's 24 library systems have received funds to renovate, expand or construct library facilities. Fiscal Year 2020 is the thirteenth year that State assistance has been available to public libraries in Maryland. Since FY2008, \$60,025,000 has been authorized which has generated an estimated \$350,000,000 in local matching funds.

Extending funding for the **State Library Resource Center (SLRC)** is another excellent leveraging of state dollars to benefit residents across the state of Maryland. The Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central Library was designated to be the State Library Resource Center in 1971 in an effort to provide and expand access to specialized library materials and services that are necessary for coordinated, efficient, and economical library services in Maryland. From internet access via the SAILOR network, to the databases that our librarians, customers and K-12 students use on a daily basis, to training on topics like identifying fake news, the resources and staff of the SLRC are invaluable to us and to our users. This legislation provides continued investment in our State Library Resource Center which is, in turn, an investment in libraries, public school students and library users around the state.

Thank you very much for your consideration and continued support of Maryland libraries.

Sincerely,

Heidi Daniel

Chief Executive Officer, Enoch Pratt Free Library

cc: Members, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee