



The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 604 State Libraries

Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and State Library Board – Alterations

Testimony of Delegate Cathi Forbes

Hearing February 13, 2020 at 1:00 pm

Ways and Means

What this bill does

This bill would change the name of the Maryland Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped to the Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled.

The bill would also require one of the appointed members of the Maryland State Library Board be a patron of the Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled.

Why this bill matters

The Maryland Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) was established in 1968 and has operated continuously as part of the national network of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), operated by the Library of Congress.

This is the first request to change the name.

The name change required by HB 604 would align our branch in Maryland with the 2019 name change of the National Library. This change was made at both the National and International levels to better represent the patrons and mission of these libraries.

This name change is also necessary because the word “handicapped” has become an archaic term with negative and limiting connotations. The change to “print disabled” will better represent that a person’s disability pertains to reading only.

The other provision of the bill, to require one of the appointed members of the Maryland State Library Board be a patron of the Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, ensures necessary diversity on the library board. In 2016, Governor Hogan and the Maryland

General Assembly created the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA), and established the Maryland State Library Board (MSLB) to oversee the MSLA. The MSLB consists of seven members appointed by the Governor and five members from government and library entities. There was no provision in this law to include a member to represent the interests of the Maryland Library for the Blind. HB 604 would require that a knowledgeable blind person also be designated as a member of the MSLB to ensure that the specialized needs of the Maryland Library for the Blind are supported.

Who benefits from this bill

In Maryland, this library has more than 10,000 registered users, and nearly 7,000 regular users who receive their books and magazines in braille or audio formats delivered by postage-free mail or instant downloads.

To use this free braille and talking book library service, patrons must prove they are blind or physically disabled. This library serves people with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness, or a physical disability that prevents them from reading or holding a printed book. It also serves people with dyslexia and brain injuries that prevent them from reading printed materials.

Why you should vote for this bill

The Maryland Library for the Blind serves constituents in every legislative district of our state. This bill matters to them, as well as the library's dedicated staff. The new name more accurately represents the patrons, and the mission, of the library. It uses a contemporary voice free from negative and misleading connotations.

In addition, blind library patrons deserve to be represented on the Maryland State Library Board. Their interests are unique and important. As it stands now, no one on this board has the expertise or the experience to advise the Maryland State Library Agency on the specialized needs of these library users.

Please note that this legislation is supported the National Federation for the Blind-Maryland.

The words we choose and the language we use matter. In passing this law, we are not just changing a name. We are changing the way the state officially identifies an entire group of citizens. I ask that you give this bill a favorable report. Thank you.