



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

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HB 436

February 10, 2021

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee
FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 436 – Enoch Pratt Free Library – Operating Hours and Funding
POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 436.

HB 436 would remove the sunset on the mandate of an additional \$3 million annually from the State to fund additional operating hours for the Enoch Pratt Free Library (Pratt). The City would continue to provide a 25% match – \$750,000 – in funding to further support the increased hours of operation.

The Pratt is an invaluable fixture in our City. HB 436 is pertinent to ensuring that our students and residents continue to have increased access to the vital resources and services the library system provides. We hope that the library can build on the growth afforded to them with the extension of this funding by ensuring that all branches can operate under additional hours with a commitment to equity and inclusion for the benefit of all communities across the City.

Even during the pandemic, the Pratt has made great strides to provide programming and resources for our communities. Without the mandated funding, the library would be forced to reduce services and lay off workers at a time when the constituents of this City need library access the most. Our communities would lose a level of access that they have come to rely on. Ensuring equitable access to library resources and services, particularly in poor and underserved communities, is a top priority for this Administration.

Accordingly, the BCA requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 436.

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