

Budget and Taxation Committee
HB 1249: Libraries – Capital Projects – State Share Adjustments
March 15, 2022
Support

Dear Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and Committee Members,

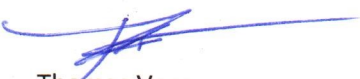
I'm writing to express support for HB 1249: Libraries – Capital Projects – State Share Adjustments, a bill that will allow public libraries to use the same adjustment in the state-local match formula as the Build to Learn Act provides for public school systems. This critical change to the match rate for Library Capital Grants will enable the communities of Garrett County to finally participate in this much-needed program.

The State's capital grant program for libraries has been an invaluable resource for construction projects throughout the State, and all MD library jurisdictions have participated in the program save Garrett County. Garrett currently has a 50-50 match rate that has put capital construction out of reach for its aging library facilities (which average at 58 years old). Garrett is a rural county with median household income in the bottom quartile of the State, and the presence of vacation homes around Deep Creek Lake has historically distorted perceptions of the area's economy.

This bill would use language employed in the Built To Learn Act, passed by the General Assembly in 2020, which enables certain counties to use the match rate of neighboring jurisdictions for capital projects. HB 1249 would apply that same language to Education Code 23-509, which governs library capital projects. While it is a statewide bill, the first beneficiary would be the Ruth Enlow Library which will garner local support for significant capital upgrades by using Allegany County's 90-10 state-local match. The community of Friendsville, whose library is housed in a building built as a "temporary" metal structure in 1970, would be the first to benefit with a proposed new building and act as a driver for educational and economic development in that area. We are currently working on a State funding request for this project beginning in fiscal year 2024. Without the proposed changes, this project will be impossible.

I wish to thank Delegate Beitzel as well as the other sponsors of this bill for their support of this important legislation and respectfully ask for your support of HB 1249 which will enable us to provide Garrett County's communities with the library resources that will help them reach their full potential.

Sincerely,


Thomas Vose
Director
Ruth Enlow Library of Garrett County