



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 22, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the critical work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Kent County Public Library system has been instrumental in connecting students and remote workers to the internet via hotspots and a Chromebook lending program. Hardware was purchased with CARES Act and ARPA funding and is being sustained with careful management of budgets as the need for additional means of connectivity is still very much present in the County. Additionally, we have given out over 150 Amazon Kindle Fires to ensure community members have access to technology permanently in their homes.

Thanks to the Building Lifelong Learners Act, we instituted fine-free borrowing for minors, and due to the pandemic, we have gone fine-free for adults as well. At present, our visitor door count is back up, but we still offer services like curbside pick-up availability and program kits.

In conjunction with the health department, we have been a mask and test kit distribution site, sharing trustworthy information and holding vaccine clinics. However, before this partnership, Kent County was one of the first libraries systems in the state to pass out 200 at-home test kits in response to the increase of positive COVID-19 cases.

As one of the smallest counties in Maryland, we could not be as successful without the support of the Eastern Shore Regional Library. They have provided funding for vital staff training, material delivery services to all eight counties on the shore, and expanded access to ebook collections. We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685, which will allow us to continue to grow our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

V/R,

Arnessa Dowell
KCPL Executive Director

KENT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ■ 408 HIGH STREET ■ CHESTERTOWN, MD 21620

PH: 410.778.3636 ■ FAX: 410.778.6756

www.kentcountylibrary.org



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding Support

February 7, 2022

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Despite a challenging year in which the library was closed to in-person visits for 37 weeks out of the year, operated under limited capacity for 48 weeks, and unable to offer popular indoor programming throughout the entire year, Wicomico Public Libraries adapted and persisted in serving our community.

During the last fiscal year, Wicomico Public Libraries provided service at 13,310 curbside appointments. 2,863 patrons attended 288 online programs that connected people to their community during a time when many of our neighbors were experiencing isolation. The library accommodated 36,641 “virtual visits” at which patrons connected with library services and resources from the safety of their homes. The library provided 15,144 wireless sessions, connecting people to the internet including by circulating mobile hotspots. The number of library card holders grew to 68,301 active users representing over 65% of the growing population we serve.

Throughout the pandemic, the library served as a source for information and equal access to important public health information. The library has partnered with the local health department to host vaccination clinics, and distribute thousands of test kits and masks to the public

We have relied on funding provided to Regional Resource Centers especially for ensuring access to digital content such as eBooks, online journals, databases, and other research tools. The Regional Centers also provide vital training and professional development tools for our staff as we adapt to rapid changes caused by the pandemic.

EDUCATE. INNOVATE. INSPIRE.

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CENTRE BRANCH – Centre at Salisbury, Salisbury, MD 21801 (410) 546-5397

PITTSVILLE BRANCH – 34372 Old Ocean City Road, Pittsville, MD 21850 (410) 835-2353

www.wicomicolibraries.org



Support for the regional resource centers is an effective and efficient way to strengthen local libraries. For that reason, we wholeheartedly express our support for HB 685 as vital to Wicomico Public Libraries.

As the new Executive Director of Wicomico Public Libraries, I am focused on expanding our reach to all areas of the county, strengthening our partnerships and programs, improving our facilities and technology, and developing the library as an asset that improves the quality of life for residents and adds value to our community.

Respectfully, we ask that you support HB 685 bill which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seth Hershberger', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Seth Hershberger, Director

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February 10, 2022

House Ways and Means

RE: Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries – Funding

Dear Distinguished Committee Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss HB 685 pertaining to incremental increases in funding for Public Libraries and Regional Resource Centers. Per capita funding is a critical resource for public libraries across the state of Maryland and ensures that we continue to provide excellent services and resources for all our populations. A demonstration of these critical services and resources were in evidence during the pandemic over the past two years as public libraries and regionals provides essential services throughout the lockdown and more. Harford County Public Library never closed its doors virtually and provided critical internet connectivity to students, educators and families through the distribution of Wi-Fi hotspots. This program crossed the internet divide desert and created bridges for some of our most vulnerable populations during a very difficult time.

Libraries demonstrated flexibility and nimbleness during the pandemic and ensured that all Marylanders had equitable access to information and critical services. Libraries have been the rock of the community distributing free Covid test kits, masks, curated health resources, and more to ensure that our communities have the tools to ensure the safety and wellness of our families.

Per capita funding is critical for libraries to ensure that all Marylanders have equitable access to information, life-long learning, and shared resources throughout the state. Per capita library funding is mandated by law and was unanimously passed and public libraries are the best public services according to surveyed Marylanders. We serve all Marylanders equally and are vital educators for our youth in ensuring school readiness and success.

Thank you again for considering HB 685 and thank you for all that you do for our communities to ensure that Maryland continues to be a wonderful state to live, work and play.

Sincerely yours,

Mary L. Hastler, MSA, MLS
Chief Executive Officer



Centreville 121 South Commerce St., Centreville, MD, 21617 | 410-758-0980

Kent Island 200 Library Circle, Stevensville, MD, 21666 | 410-643-8161

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Queen Anne's County Library has been an important part of the ongoing recovery from the pandemic. Since the pandemic started, we have adapted our services to meet the needs of our community, first by offering online access to our services, then providing the means to get online by providing hotspots to facilitate connecting our students and remote workers to the internet. Laptop lending, programming kits to go, expanded Books by Mail, and curbside service for safe delivery of library materials were just some of the ways the library responded to help the community during this time. These services were made possible in part through the CARES Act. We've now expanded our services to include the distribution of KN95 masks and Covid-19 home test kits in partnership with the Queen Anne's County Health Department. All of these services are needed and all of them require enough staff to respond to the need and enough funds to provide the service.

The Library has been fine free for our community since 2019 to remove any barriers to accessing library services. The Building Lifelong Learners Act has made it possible for the Library to keep materials fine free for our students and adults alike. The per capita funding increases for public libraries is crucial to maintain our basic services and to adapt our services as needed to quickly respond to our ever changing environment.

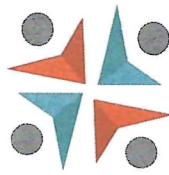
The Eastern Shore Regional Library, the shore's regional resource center, also provides needed services for our library. Without the support of our regional resource center, there would be no sharing of materials between public libraries on the eastern shore. Our regional provides the vehicle and drivers for to provide this service to all residents on the shore. Without the support of our regional resource center, our database offerings would be nonexistent. Our digital books and movies would not be available. Our Facilities Master Plan would not be done. The Eastern Shore Regional Library provides support to all eight county library systems on the shore. The increase in funding for our regional resource center is crucial to keeping our libraries moving forward and adapting to what the future may bring.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

Janet Salazar

Director



WASHINGTON COUNTY
FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet

Testimony in support of HB685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding
Hearings before the House Ways and Means Committee
February 24, 2022
Submitted by Jenny Bakos, Executive Director
Washington County Free Library

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

The Washington County Free Library is a life line to community members who are seeking employment, looking for safe-spaces after school, free internet access and opportunities to expand their horizons. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this life line, as we pivoted to provide more services (within a few weeks of initial outbreak) while many organizations in the country scaled down their offerings. We enabled patrons to reach out to trusted librarians for reliable information via phone and email, pivoted to a curbside approach for citizens to access collections and moved programming online for patrons to enjoy in the safety of their own home.

Most recently, we have partnered with the Washington County Health Department to be the main distribution site for COVID-19 tests and KN95 masks, and have been able to host vaccination clinics around the County.

Washington County also houses the Western Maryland Regional Library, which is instrumental in making sure collection is available to patrons. Without their support, the offerings of print and digital materials would be dramatically less, and we would be unable to keep up with the staggering demand. Their daily delivery service to Garrett and Allegany Counties ensures that community members across Western Maryland have equitable access to information. Western Maryland Regional Library also provides WCFL with quality staff development opportunities, and excellent support for the integrated library system (catalog) and website.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Jenny L. Bakos
Executive Director
Washington County Free Library



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding Support

February 7, 2022

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

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We have relied on funding provided to Regional Resource Centers especially for ensuring access to digital content such as eBooks, online journals, databases, and other research tools. The Regional Centers also provide vital training and professional development tools for our staff as we adapt to rapid changes caused by the pandemic.

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As the new Executive Director of Wicomico Public Libraries, I am focused on expanding our reach to all areas of the county, strengthening our partnerships and programs, improving our facilities and technology, and developing the library as an asset that improves the quality of life for residents and adds value to our community.

Respectfully, we ask that you support HB 685 bill which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seth Hershberger', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Seth Hershberger, Director

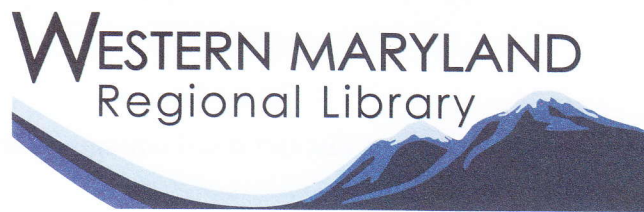
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Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Public Libraries, and the Regional Libraries that support them, were instrumental in maintaining connections for people all across the state as schools and business were shut down during the pandemic. Through hotspot and Chromebook lending programs as well as Wi-Fi extenders that reached into library parking lots, public libraries provided Internet connectivity for so many who had nowhere else to turn at a time when access to the Internet was critical.

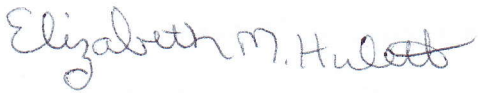
The Western Maryland Regional Library (WMRL) for its part provided hotspots and Chromebooks to each of the three county library systems in Western Maryland to supplement their collections. WMRL provided PPE funding to each system so they could reopen to the public safely and as soon as possible. In addition, WMRL created a collection of homeschool kits on a wide variety of topics including science, geography, music, and art that could be checked out by parents whose children were suddenly home schooling.

WMRL provides a wide variety of resources and services to its counties that they could not otherwise afford including staff training, delivery service, web services, and physical collections like print books and audio books on CD. However, when the libraries had to shut down in March of 2020 the importance of WMRL was keenly felt through its collection of online resources and streaming services. In FY21 library customers streamed or downloaded over 228,000 movies, television shows, audio books, ebooks, music, and comics all for free. Practically overnight libraries had to pivot to an online only model and each Regional Library in the state was crucial to its success. Overall WMRL provided over \$1,159,000.00 of support to the three county library systems in Western Maryland. Without this support the

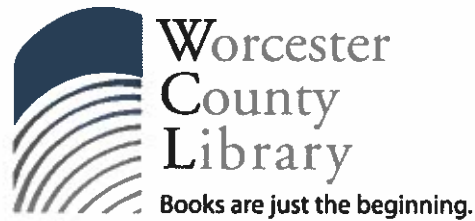
citizens of Western Maryland would be at a distinct disadvantage compared to the more populous counties in the state.

The Maryland legislature has demonstrated over time its support of libraries and the critical role they play in the education and overall welfare of their communities. We ask that you continue this support during these extraordinary times when the citizens of Maryland need our services more than ever and back the passage of HB 685.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth M. Hulett
Director
Western Maryland Regional Library



**Ways and Means Committee
HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding
February 15, 2022
Support**

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. This bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27 and will help all corners of Maryland provide valuable resources to our communities.

Worcester County Library eliminated fines for children’s materials in 2010 and went completely fine free for all materials in November 2019 prior to the Building Lifelong Learners Act passed in 2021. We are proud to have removed that barrier, and it served us well during the pandemic when we closed our book returns for 7 weeks during the spring of 2020. At the time, many libraries, including Worcester, quarantined items as a precaution and patrons were relieved not to have to worry about overdue fines.

Thanks to CARES act funding, we expanded our reach by lending hotspots and laptops to patrons. Many families had to juggle both children learning at home and parents working from home. In a rural county like Worcester, connectivity is often limited. This funding increase will help us maintain offering these services, which continue to be a lifeline for many.

The COVID-19 pandemic also propelled our Library system to turn our services outward. We began offering virtual programs, expanded remote printing service to all five branches, and offered curbside pick-up of library items. We looked for any avenue we could to help our community persevere. We used our 3D printers to print mask extenders for health care workers, scheduled vaccine appointments for our local health department, and are now currently passing out both KN95 masks and at-home test kits.

Our library is fortunate to be a member of the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL). ESRL provides the eight county library systems on the eastern shore with daily delivery of library materials, IT support, and essential training. They offer a high quality collection of eBooks and established a “Dial-a-Story” service for families when our in-person storytime programs were suspended due to the pandemic.

The Worcester County Library is more vibrant than ever and HB 685 will allow us to continue to expand our role. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your consideration of this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Ranck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Ranck
Director



**Ways and Means Committee
HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding
February 24, 2022
Support**

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Over the last two years, Anne Arundel County Public Library (AACPL) has provided a lifeline for many residents. Working with our partners in public health, AACPL staff have given out nearly 65,000 COVID-19 test kits and 250,000 high quality masks. We were the first system in the state to hold vaccine clinics and have already offered 63 opportunities to people of all ages.

Library staff have helped people navigate the safety net benefits process and get jobs. They have given away food, books, diapers and wipes. In fact, our Discoveries Library location at Westfield Annapolis Mall opened a community pantry in July for baby and menstrual products and have already served over 1,300 people. We are proud to report that the pantry was the recent recipient of ARPA funding for supplies.

In addition to the work we are known for, specifically loaning out books, movies and music, AACPL staff have built countless new services like curbside pickup, virtual programs and Chromebook/hotspot borrowing. We also enhanced our Wi-Fi for outdoor use during the most dangerous times of the pandemic.

Libraries are trusted community resources that are vital to the health and wellbeing of a community. Residents know that when they come to the library, they can feel confident in what they discover and in what they receive whether that's a COVID-19 test kit, training on how to build a resume, or kindergarten readiness classes. Best of all, we proudly serve everyone! We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in providing resources and supporting access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Skip Auld", written in a cursive style.

Skip Auld , AACPL Chief Executive Officer

Anne Arundel County
Public Library
5 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis MD 21401
410-222-7371
aacpl.net



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

Hearing Date, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) has been instrumental in connecting residents with the resources they need to succeed and thrive. During the pandemic, BCPL distributed Wi-Fi hotspots and Chrome books to address digital inequity, masks and self-test kits for COVID response, meals to mitigate food insecurity amongst children, and even winter coats on one of the coldest days of the year. BCPL launched two key initiatives during the pandemic to serve the most vulnerable among us – our Social Worker in the Library service and the Mobile Library Law Center. Time and again, BCPL has stepped up to the plate and worked well beyond the scope of traditional libraries to support our community.

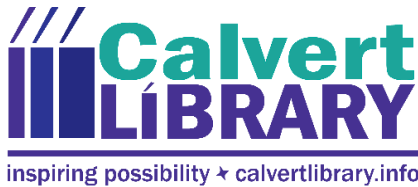
BCPL and all public libraries in the state have consistently done more with less, having served a growing population and increased need for services despite budget cuts and the pushback of per capita funding for the last four years. Further, libraries complied with the Building Lifelong Learners Act (BLLA) of 2020 by going fine free for youth without the accompanying increase in funding called for in the legislation. While this was the right thing to do – late fines posed a barrier to access for children and families – the lack of reimbursement for this lost revenue hampers libraries' ability to serve the public. For example, BCPL waived nearly \$520,000 in fines from 15,000 youth library cards. Reimbursement for BLLA could have been applied towards vital services, including the purchase a much needed replacement outreach vehicle for our Youth and Family Engagement department.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which provides adequate funding for BCPL and its initiatives, and which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Sonia Alcántara-Antoine'.

Sonia Alcántara-Antoine
Director, Baltimore County Public Library



Carrie Willson, Executive Director • cwillson@calvertlibrary.info
850 Costley Way • Prince Frederick, MD 20678 • 410-535-0291 • 301-855-1862

Ways and Means Committee
HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding
February 24, 2022
Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries – Funding** to extend per capita increases through FY27. This funding is critical for the important work being done by MD libraries, especially as we play a key role in aiding recovery from the pandemic.

By late spring of 2020, Calvert Library was producing online storytime and other virtual programming, hosting zoom meetings for community organizations, providing Wi-Fi access in our parking lots and had hotspots on-order. We carefully spent CARES Act and ARPA funding on hotspots and Chromebooks to help bridge the digital divide. Our staff never stopped assisting customers with digital literacy, teaching users how to use downloadable materials, Zoom and Teams, apply for jobs online, and find vaccine appointments and testing info. Teachers relied on their students' special Calvert Library student card for access to downloadable books, trustworthy information and primary source material; especially when they were learning remotely. Thanks to our Health Department, we have provided clear information and supportive services like safe business reopening, vaccine appointments and free test-kits.

Funding support from Calvert County Government enabled us to get a new Bookmobile on the road in November 2021 which has allowed us to provide library access in the corners of the county where children and seniors, especially, have transportation challenges getting to our other library locations.

Usage of downloadable content nearly doubled during the pandemic; Southern MD Regional Library Association (SMRLA) was able to fund these collections at a higher rate to try and meet demand. Your support of SB448 will ensure Maryland's regional libraries can continue providing these important digital services in addition to necessary training, IT, technical services, and material delivery. Without the support of our Regional Library and the consortial relationship they facilitate with Charles and St. Mary's county libraries Calvert Library would not be able to meet our community's needs without significant cuts to our current public service.

Maryland's libraries have always been responsible stewards of our state funding, consistently doing more with less. We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685, which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carrie Willson
Executive Director

**Testimony in support of HB 685
Public Libraries – Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries – Funding
Hearing before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Tuesday, February 15 at 1 pm**

Dear Distinguished Committee Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support SB 448 Public Libraries – Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries – Funding. The bill is intended to ensure that Maryland's 24 Public Libraries and their Regional Resource Centers have sustained funding for the coming fiscal years, so they can provide for the information and educational needs of their communities.

Communities throughout Maryland depend on their public libraries to provide a myriad of services, programs and resources. In times of crisis, such as the ones we have experienced in the last 2 years, libraries have become more important than ever. Beyond being a place where individuals borrow items to read, listen or view, they are community hubs. Libraries across the state provide test kits and masks, serve as vaccine clinic locations, expanded their Wi-Fi signals to allow people to connect to the internet, engage in online programs to people feel connected and informed, created pickup services to provide materials to people safely during the height of the pandemic, and continue to serve the information needs of people across their areas. They also supply workforce development training, introduce communities to new technology, and provide training to help prepare the next generation workforce.

Carroll County Public Library recently opened Exploration Commons. This 14,000 sq. ft. high-tech makerspace and commercial teaching kitchen is where we are doing workforce development training and enrichment workshops. Classes include coding, design and fabrication, nutrition and wellness, and use of AR/VR and AV equipment as well as providing the community with a suite of meeting rooms. Public libraries across Maryland are developing new and innovative services to meet the needs of the people in their community.

The Region Resource Centers provide crucial support for the Western, Southern and Eastern Shore regions of Maryland. The Regionals support the work of their public libraries through technology support, staff development and training, delivery services, marketing and publicity, website support and many other services. By providing these services to the libraries in their region, they allow those public libraries to focus their manpower, resources, and funding to improving their collections, providing programs, and serving their unique communities.

Maryland has a strong history of valuing its educational organizations, such as public libraries. This legislation will allow libraries to continue to develop and grow the next generation of libraries. Thank you very much for your consideration and continued support of Maryland libraries.

Sincerely,



Andrea Berstler, MLA, MLIS
Executive Director, Carroll County Public Library
Legislative Officer, Maryland Library Association

Eastern Shore REGIONAL LIBRARY

31901 Tri-County Way Suite 116-B Salisbury, MD 21801 ph: 410-742-1537 fax: 410-548-5807

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 18, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

As a supporting organization for eight county library systems, Eastern Shore Regional Library has witnessed the great work done by our public libraries over the last several years. Libraries bounced back quickly after early COVID-19 closings and found new ways to reach out to impacted citizens. From curbside materials pickups to portable hotspots & laptops to dispensing PPE and COVID-19 test kits, public libraries worked through their own staff shortages to provide services to isolated and struggling citizens. In the rural areas, our libraries succeeded in extending Internet connectivity to citizens in remote areas - helping schools, local governments, and small businesses realize their missions.

The Eastern Shore Regional Library has one responsibility and that is helping our member libraries provide the highest quality services to their users. During the pandemic, ESRL distributed \$150,000 in CARES funds to the eight library systems to help with PPE, Internet expansion, and service adjustments like curbside materials pickup. ESRL circulated 333,054 streaming books and media resources in fy21, a remarkable 15% increase over fy20. ESRL's Grants to Libraries program provided \$600,000 in grants to our member libraries for service enhancements, collection development, staff development, and programming.

With this support, the public libraries on the Eastern Shore maintained consistently impressive service levels during a difficult period.

I am deeply grateful to the Maryland Legislature as a whole for their commitment to public libraries and the services we provide to our citizens. I respectfully ask for your support of SB 448 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,



John C. Venditta, Administrator
Eastern Shore Regional Library, Inc.



FREDERICK
COUNTY
**PUBLIC
LIBRARIES**

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

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I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Frederick County Public Libraries remains committed to simplifying access and building bridges in our community.

During the pandemic, we upgraded hardware to extend the reach of wifi beyond our walls. In a county where broadband access is limited and others face economic barriers to access, our wifi service has been a lifeline. We have seen record use – up 22% in the past 6 months.

We expanded eContent and print collections to help meet skyrocketing demand.

We stayed nimble by adapting service models to continue providing access to library collections and programming while keeping the community and staff safe.

We leveraged partnerships to extend our reach.

Our Student Success Card program with Frederick County Public Schools ensures that every student has access to the public library's collections and to digital products like Brainfuse which provides live tutoring assistance. This added support was critical as students transitioned into and out of virtual learning environments.

Board of Trustees

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Director

James Kelly

Administrative Offices

110 East Patrick Street, Frederick, MD 21701
P 301.600.1613 F 301.600.3789 www.fcpl.org

With Frederick County Workforce Services, we are partnering on a project to deploy laptops and hotspots to aid in job searching, resume writing, and virtual interviews.

Finally, with the Frederick County Health Department, our team regularly assisted at vaccine clinics and we now host weekly vaccine clinics at four of our library branches. Additionally, just last week, our team distributed 3,000 test kits and over 95,000 KN95 masks.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JK', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

James Kelly
Director
Frederick County Public Libraries
110 East Patrick St.
Frederick, MD 21701
(301) 600-3767



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

Hearing Date, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) has been instrumental in connecting residents with the resources they need to succeed and thrive. During the pandemic, BCPL distributed Wi-Fi hotspots and Chrome books to address digital inequity, masks and self-test kits for COVID response, meals to mitigate food insecurity amongst children, and even winter coats on one of the coldest days of the year. BCPL launched two key initiatives during the pandemic to serve the most vulnerable among us – our Social Worker in the Library service and the Mobile Library Law Center. Time and again, BCPL has stepped up to the plate and worked well beyond the scope of traditional libraries to support our community.

BCPL and all public libraries in the state have consistently done more with less, having served a growing population and increased need for services despite budget cuts and the pushback of per capita funding for the last four years. Further, libraries complied with the Building Lifelong Learners Act (BLLA) of 2020 by going fine free for youth without the accompanying increase in funding called for in the legislation. While this was the right thing to do – late fines posed a barrier to access for children and families – the lack of reimbursement for this lost revenue hampers libraries' ability to serve the public. For example, BCPL waived nearly \$520,000 in fines from 15,000 youth library cards. Reimbursement for BLLA could have been applied towards vital services, including the purchase a much needed replacement outreach vehicle for our Youth and Family Engagement department.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which provides adequate funding for BCPL and its initiatives, and which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Salcantara'.

Sonia Alcántara-Antoine
Director, Baltimore County Public Library



Dana Newman
Director

100 West Dover Street
Easton, MD 21601

Telephone
410-822-1626
Fax
410-820-8217

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

During the pandemic, the Talbot County Free Library (TCFL) has become a lifeline for residents and visitors; helping people to find vital resources, programming or services that support healing, learning and personal growth. Library staff and volunteers have been dedicated to helping people of all ages in our community to find jobs, file for unemployment, find vital healthcare information, and enrich learning experiences by presenting library programs. The library has also provided much needed resources and innovative outreach during the last two years including by giving away COVID-19 test kits and KN95 masks; delivering citizenship study materials to the Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center; giving free books to youth organizations; adding a Spanish language collection to the Detention Center; and bringing early literacy programs out into the community.

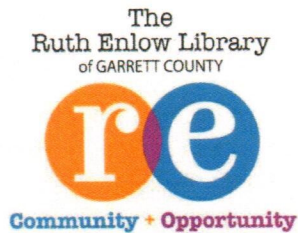
TCFL has been instrumental in connecting students and remote workers to the internet via its Wi-Fi hotspot lending program. Many Talbot County residents, similar to other rural counties in Maryland, have a need for Internet connectivity, as they either do not have a reliable Internet connection or have no connection at all. In 2022, we have already seen the library offer new technology to aid in local efforts toward equity of internet access. In January, the library added 50 new Wi-Fi hotspots for circulation with Emergency Connectivity funding and has developed a grant-funded project to add free Community Wi-Fi access in the town of Trappe. While these projects are grant funded for the current year, the library will need to find funding to continue providing the data for the Wi-Fi hotspots as our budget is strained with additional costs associated with providing services during the Pandemic.

The Eastern Shore Regional Library provides vital guidance, development, grant support, delivery of materials between shore libraries, and funding to the eight library systems that it serves. Without its support during the Pandemic, public libraries across the Eastern Shore would not have been able to provide as many resources and services as we have to our communities.

Libraries and regional resource centers are critical to providing support to the public during times of hardship, like the COVID-19 pandemic, and are instrumental in helping with economic recovery. We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities.

Sincerely,

Dana Newman
Library Director



Ways and Means Committee
HB685/SB 448 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding
Support

February 15, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I would like to add my voice in support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries – Funding, which is intended to extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. This funding is a critical pillar of support for Library services in Garrett County specifically, in Western Maryland regionally, as well as throughout the State as a whole – especially with those services being more important to the community than ever.

Throughout the pandemic, the Ruth Enlow Library has worked to meet the changing needs of our community in any way we can. We have proudly partnered with the Health Department and served as the main conduit in the County for getting free COVID-19 test kits and KN95 masks to our citizens. We have developed new resources and take-home programs for the many kids who have had to learn at home during this period, and specifically reached out to the homeschooling community to ensure that we are meeting their needs. We have expanded our in-house Wifi to the parking lots and obtained Wifi hotspots and Chromebook computers to help bridge a digital divide that remains very real in Garrett County. And thanks to the Building Lifelong Learners Act, we have also been happy to be able to remove fines as an obstacle preventing kids in our community from checking out materials.

But we can't do it alone, and the Western Maryland Regional Library (WMRL) has been an invaluable support enabling our efforts. The delivery service they provide has welded together the Garrett, Allegany and Washington County library systems ensuring that patrons of any have access to all three collections. Their financial support paid for the Chromebook computers and hotspots we now check out, and the online resources and ebook collections they fund would be impossible for us to obtain without them. Support for the Regional Resource Centers is critical for a smaller system like ours.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas Vose
Director
Ruth Enlow Library of Garrett County



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

The Charles County Public Library has implemented new way to reach customers over the past two years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Pivoted to virtual programming, expanded digital resources, and introduced curbside pickup of materials and remote printing service.
- Reduced barriers to library services by going fine-free for all users in April 2021
- Increased our number of mobile hotspots for checkout to address the digital divide.
- Added Chromebook/hotspot bundles for checkout
- Provided 24 hr. WiFi service in branch library parking lots.
- Launched the Imagination Library of Charles County in October 2021 (partnering with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library) to provide free books every month for all Charles County children up to the age of 5.
- Were awarded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants to purchase a new Outreach van to reach underserved areas, and install WiFi antennas on our branch library roofs to expand coverage.
- Currently partnering with the Charles County Health Department to distribute COVID-19 rapid test kits and N95 face masks to the community.

Charles County libraries and residents are also served by the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA). SMRLA provides support through material ordering and cataloging functions, inter-library loan administration, delivery services, numerous training opportunities for staff. Crucially, SMRLA helped meet community demand by expanding the ebook collections for all Southern Maryland libraries when library doors were closed due to the pandemic.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

KennethWayne Thompson
Executive Director
Charles County Public Library



ENOCH PRATT
free LIBRARY

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library has been instrumental in connecting students and remote workers to the internet via hotspots and Chromebook lending program. Hardware was purchased with CARES Act and ARPA funding and is being sustained with careful management of budgets as the need for additional means of connectivity is still very much present in the Baltimore City.

Thanks to the Building Lifelong Learners Act, public libraries across the state instituted fine-free borrowing for minors. I'm happy to advise that the Enoch Pratt Free Library has been fine free for more than four years, resulting in improved access to our customers. While library visits have been down during the pandemic, we have held programs virtually, instituted curbside pick-up of materials, purchased more electronic materials, and improved wi-fi in communities across the city benefitting customers without internet availability. We have conducted virtual wellness checks on customers and distributed free masks and COVID test kits throughout the library system to help protect our communities.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library also serves as the State Library Resource Center, the hub of the state library network providing specialized service to libraries and customers around the State. This legislation would support our partners, the Regional Resource Centers who collaborate with us daily on service delivery.

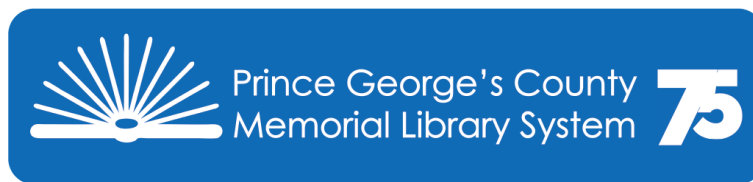
We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

Heidi Daniel

Chief Executive Officer

Enoch Pratt Free Library



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

February 9, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) continues to swiftly adapt its services to meet the needs of our community. Our national award-winning Workforce and Community Development program provides job readiness resources, programs, and support for Prince George's County residents. We worked to bridge employability gaps by focusing on the digital divide during the pandemic by providing innovative virtual programming, training, and community partnerships. PGCMLS developed a [microsite](#) and [business wiki](#) to improve equitable access to resources for all customers, including those transitioning into entrepreneurship. These programs and services have led directly to Prince George's County residents gaining employment during a period of up to 11% unemployment.

Prince George's County Memorial Library System is a committed and trusted partner providing critical health and wellness resources to our community. In addition to curating and promoting timely and authoritative health information for our customers, we have worked hand-in-hand with the Maryland and Prince George's County's Health Departments to host vaccination clinics and mass distribution events for rapid test kits and KN95 masks. PGCMLS has been able to fill vital information and resource gaps through innovative services such as our bilingual COVID-19 vaccine hunter hotline.

Our libraries are embedded in and serve our diverse communities like no other entity. We continue to fill the critical demand for services by job seekers, small business owners, students, and Marylanders of all ages. Maryland's public libraries and regional resource centers have always been responsible stewards of our state per capita funding, consistently doing more with less. We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685, which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Roberta Phillips
Chief Executive Officer



Southern Maryland
Regional Library Association, Inc.
Advancing Library Excellence

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

The Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA) partners with Southern Maryland's public libraries to implement services to support over 373,000 Marylanders. We administered over \$60,000 in CARES Act funding which the libraries used to purchase PPE for their staff; hotspots and the service required to use them; signage; and equipment for virtual programming.

We were able to pivot from in person training to virtual training. These trainings help our library workers earn their required continuing education credits in order to maintain their certification. As our public library partners pivoted to curbside services to keep books in the hands of customers, we prepared over 54,000 items for check out. Through our regional and statewide cooperative lending agreements, we sent over one million items through our delivery service.

Once the public libraries were able to reopen safely, we dedicated over \$220,000 to support the implementation of radio frequency identification (RFID). This project allows customers to check out materials without staff intervention and also helps library staff expedite checking in materials once they are returned.

To support access to digital collections, SMRLA dedicated \$200,000 in FY 21 to ebook collections. With the pandemic ongoing, SMRLA anticipates needing to continue to implement new technology and to purchase more digital collections to help public libraries serve their customers.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ashley Teagle



SOMERSET
COUNTY LIBRARY

Explore • Learn • Dream • Become

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, the Library has expanded services in new directions to serve our community. Using ARPA funds, we have acquired laptops for patron use and expanded our wireless networks – particularly vital as, between economic and geographic barriers to digital equity, Somerset County households are significantly less likely than average state residents to have a computer (83.4% vs. 92.4%) or a broadband connection (73.7% vs. 86.4%).

The Library also debuted take-home and virtual programming during the pandemic, and both of these have remained popular even as we resume in-person events and classes. We also rolled out curbside pickup during the pandemic and have assisted the Health Department by distributing test kits and hosting vaccine clinics.

Support from the Eastern Shore Regional Library is vital to providing services to our community. The Regional Library's electronic materials budget alone provides Somerset County residents with access to more than \$500,000 worth of eBooks, premium databases, and audio and video content that would be out of range, by an order of magnitude, for us to attempt to purchase and manage on our own. The Regional Library is also vital in administering our collection management software, providing daily delivery both between our branches and to our branches from the rest of the State, and providing a wealth of professional development opportunities for Somerset Library staff.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ed Goyda".

Ed Goyda

Library Director

Crisfield Princess Anne Ewell

11767 Beechwood Street, Princess Anne, MD 21853

phone: 410.651.0852

fax: 410.651.1388

www.somelibrary.org



February 4, 2022

Ways and Means Committee
Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Caroline County Public Library staff moved very quickly to continue to serve our citizens throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, even while our facilities were closed. This includes using CARES Act funding to start up a service providing laptops and hotspots for loan, as the lack of Internet access is still a huge issue in Caroline County. We've pivoted and adapted to the continued pandemic to provide our early literacy storytimes and Summer reading program, encouraging our children to read over the school break. Our three branches are the business and tech assistance centers for printing, photocopies, faxing, and computer access and training in our county. Additionally our branches serve as adjunct job centers, partnering with our local workforce development partners. Our branches are a safe haven for many of our youth after school and summers. We are now providing some services virtually, offer curbside pick-up, and Books-By-Mail. Early in the pandemic, we started up a COVID-19 call center and staffed it for the Caroline County Health Department until we were able to re-open our facilities. Currently we are partnering with the Health Department to distribute face masks and COVID self-test kits.

We are grateful to have the support of the Eastern Shore Regional Library, which serves the eight Eastern Shore public library systems. ESRL's support ensures all our residents have access to ebooks and other electronic resources. ESRL manages our automated circulation system, saving us money and helping us better share our resources on the Eastern Shore. ESRL's delivery system provides our library customers prompt deliveries of items borrowed from not only the Eastern Shore, but the rest of the Maryland public libraries. ESRL staff provide technical assistance and access to the professional training our staff need to meet certification requirements. ESRL also provides our E. S. public libraries with Wi-Fi, which extends to our parking lots for after-hours Internet access.

We respectfully ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Debby Bennett, Executive Director

info@carolib.org • www.carolib.org

Central Library
100 Market Street
Denton, Maryland 21629
p 410.479.1343 f 410.479.1443

Federalsburg Branch
123 Morris Avenue
Federalsburg, Maryland 21632
p 410.754.8397 f 410.754.3058

North County Branch
101 Cedar Lane • P.O. Box 336
Greensboro, Maryland 21639
p 410.482.2173 f 410.482.2634



31 Washington Street, Cumberland, MD 21502

Telephone (301) 777-1200 Fax (301) 777-7299

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 - Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chair, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic, public libraries safely transformed the delivery of lifelong learning services with curbside delivery, we moved our reading programs to outdoor story times and events, and we added additional virtual storytimes and found a new audience as entire day care centers could now attend virtually.

Since public libraries have reopened their doors to the public, our efforts to support our communities expanded with the partnerships to distribute KN95 masks and rapid test kits to worried constituents. Allegan and many libraries have also stepped up to serve as vaccination clinic sites. Here in Western Maryland we went a step further and started to check out WiFi Hotspots and Chromebooks to help citizens without internet access in our communities.

In short, there is no limit to what we can do and how we can help if we are given the resources. This bill provides a steady stream of income that is a vital component to the many ways in addition to books and movies that we adapt and transform to serve our communities.

We ask for your support of HB 685 which will allow us to continue to expand our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John E. Taube".

John E. Taube
Executive Director

Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. This bill will extend critically needed per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

While our services to the community may look different since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, our staff have never stopped working to support Cecil County citizens through the most challenging periods in our lifetime. We immediately used CARES Act and repositioned budget dollars to extend free public Wifi outside our buildings to students, teachers, and other community members, hosted hundreds of virtual learning programs, and created an online library card to ensure that all members of our community could access the library's resources for the period while our buildings were closed. We distributed hundreds of thousands of books and other materials through contactless pick-up, launched a home delivery service to the community's most vulnerable seniors, and got to work connecting struggling small business owners and non-profits with resources and information expertise to help them stay afloat. This past December, the Maryland Association of Counties recognized our library system's Business Information Center with the Innovation Champion Award for Rural Counties for the vital impact they have created in this arena.

In addition, our branch libraries became a powerful partner with our County Health Department. Our librarians called thousands of seniors who lack internet access to schedule vaccination appointments, hosted vaccination clinics, and most recently, served as the primary distributor for free rapid test-kits throughout the county. Our staff have courageously taken on these new duties at a time when Cecil County posts some of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the state out of service and love for their community.

Finally, with no additional county support for operations or staffing, our library system opened its long-awaited new North East Branch Library in April 2021 to a community in desperate need of connection—both informational and technological as well as human. Since it's opening, this new state capital library grant support branch has welcomed more than 80,000 visitors, circulated hundreds of thousands of books and other learning materials, and hosted 2,610 study and meeting room users who have met, worked, and connected to create a better community for all.

Our commitment, dedication, and impact has been unwavering. If anything, it has grown substantially. Maryland's public library regionally library systems need your support to successfully meet expanded needs for services from their communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Morgan Miller, Executive Director



Ways and Means Committee

HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding

February 24, 2022

Support

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 685 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries - Funding**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY27. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities, especially as libraries aid in recovery from the pandemic.

Howard County Library System continues to play a critical role in addressing the digital divide for the approximately 3,300 households in Howard County without broadband internet access. Our laptop and hotspot lending program enables disconnected adults and seniors to gain access to digital lifelong learning resources, gainful employment, health information, and access to civic and cultural participation.

Our role is just as critical in providing supports for the more than 57,000 K-12 students served by our library. Howard County Library System provides every student an A+ student account giving them access to books and eBooks, free online homework help, and online resources for assignments and out of school learning.

We are committed and intentional about reducing barriers to learning. Aligned with the Building Lifelong Learners Act, we instituted fine-free borrowing for customers of all ages.

We know how much our community needs and relies on the library. During the pandemic, use of eBooks increased 71% and we filled an average of 1,700 contactless pickup requests per day. We lent sewing machines to aid in the production of face masks and gowns. We created a COVID-19 web portal with resources around food, mental health issues, unemployment, housing, and utilities; business resources related to the pandemic; and general help. Our COVID-19 response also included partnering with the Indian Cultural Association to distribute over 2 million pounds of food from library parking lots and growing 411 pounds of produce in our Miller Branch Enchanted Garden to donate to the Howard County Food Bank.

Howard County Library System is the center of community culture, enhancing lives in myriad ways every day.

We respectfully ask for your support of SB 448 which will allow us to continue to support equity and access in everyone in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens, President & CEO
Howard County Library System