

Mark M. Caplan

March 1, 2023

Chairman Guy J. Guzzone
Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building

Dear Chairman Guzzone and members of the Budget & Taxation Committee:

I am an Enoch Pratt Free Library Board member. I strongly support **SB 502 Enoch Pratt Free Library – Capital Project Funding** which would provide much-needed capital funding for library branches.

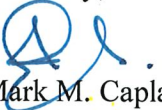
Libraries are vital community hubs, helping to stabilize neighborhoods and providing a world of opportunities to users. In Baltimore City, where access to the internet is limited or non-existent for our customers, we help bridge that digital divide. Through partnerships with Legal Aid, the University of Maryland School of Social Work, and Morgan State, our customers can access social work and legal services in the community. Our presence in the community allows learners of all ages access to information, and our meeting rooms allow non-profit groups space to meet on essential topics for the community.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library operates one of the oldest library systems in the United States, operating out of 19 locations that are more than 50 years old (six are over 100 years old). The deferred maintenance at those locations has resulted in the need to close libraries for long periods. In the last 18 months, we lost approximately 2,200 public service hours due to failing heating and air conditioning systems. There is significant need to address ADA and building code deficiencies. Library spaces need modernization to allow for library services required today, flexible spaces that meet each community's needs.

We fully support SB 502 and urge the committee to issue a favorable report that would result in improved library facilities that will serve Baltimore City customers for years.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark M. Caplan