



**Testimony in support of SB 501 Libraries – Aging Infrastructure  
Capital Improvement Grant Program before the Budget and Taxation Committee  
February 28, 2023**

Dear Chairman Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

We write to you today in full support of SB 501 which establishes the Aging Infrastructure Capital Improvement Grant Program to be administered by the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA).

This Grant Program provides the necessary framework to support the current and growing capital needs of libraries throughout the state. More than half of the 191 public libraries in Maryland are over twenty-five years old. Infrastructure needs range from roof replacements to technological upgrades to general renovations, and 6 buildings have been identified for replacement. The total estimated cost for statewide projects exceeds \$424 million.

MSLA has developed procedures to receive requests and distribute State capital funding through the annual County Library Capital Grant Program. As project costs have escalated, grant requests have become larger, thereby decreasing the number of projects and geographic diversity in the distribution of awards. This funding would enable us to complete more robust upgrades to our oldest branches and ensure that all Maryland communities have access to 21<sup>st</sup> century library service.

For the Worcester County Library, this legislation is particularly timely. We are in the design phase for a new library to serve Pocomoke and the southern end of our County, replacing a nearly 53 year old building. Our most recent cost estimate completed in January 2023 shows a project total of \$9,354,000 (including a 7% escalation contingency). This funding would enable us to increase our collections and community meeting space, as well as expand access to the internet and borrowable technology.

Let's build on Maryland's commitment to its residents so we can strengthen and sustain our library infrastructure for generations to come. We strongly encourage you to fully support SB 501.

Sincerely,

Worcester County Library Board of Trustees