

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**SB0831 – Libraries - Regional Resource Centers – Governance Requirements**  
**February 22, 2023**

Dear Chair Feldman, and Vice Chair Kagen and Committee members:

I am writing in **Support of SB0831 Libraries – Regional Resource Centers – Governance Requirements**

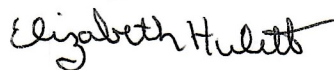
The three regional resource centers in Maryland are a foundational force to the operations of the fourteen county library systems they support in rural Maryland. With the support of the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland State Library Agency, they have assured that rural Marylanders receive equity of service and access equivalent to that of their urban neighbors. However, as the three regional resource centers have evolved over the years to better serve their communities, the 1957 law governing the centers has not evolved with them. Although Maryland's regional resource centers are in compliance with community-based, principled governance structures, SB0831 updates and clarifies that law.

Over the last 18 month the three regional resource centers, the fourteen county libraries they serve, and the Maryland State Library Agency have been working together to strengthen the current code. SB0831 contains specific language that defines the governance of the centers while reflecting the specific needs of each entity. Specifically, this bill ensures that the Western Maryland Regional Library will continue to function the way that provides the most support to the citizens of Western Maryland, by allowing it to continue under the auspices of the Washington County Free Library Board of Trustees. Under this arrangement, the administrative costs are significantly lower for the Western Maryland Regional Library, which in turn allows more state funding to support the materials and services important to Western Maryland citizens. This is particularly important in the Western region as it is the smallest of the three regionals and since fiscal year 2017 both Allegany and Garrett counties have suffered population loss.

The Boards of Trustees in Garrett, Allegany, and Washington counties, as well as all three library directors, agree that this is the best form of governance for the Western Maryland Regional Library as it preserves its financial viability and operational strength.

Maryland public libraries are among the strongest, if not the strongest system of public libraries in the nation. This is due in large part to the continued support of the Maryland General Assembly and its support of regional libraries for which I am very grateful. I respectfully ask for your support of SB0831.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hulett

Director

Western Maryland Regional Library