



Southern Maryland

Regional Library Association, Inc.

Advancing Library Excellence

February 21, 2023

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee members:

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

The Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA) is one of three regional resource centers in Maryland. With the support of the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland State Library Agency, we have assured that rural Marylanders receive equity of service and access equivalent to that of our 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 months 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 SMRLA's governing board is a separate entity from our public library partners. Our current structure requires that I recruit SMRLA's Board members from the Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County public library boards.

As stated above, this structure may be attributed to out of date governance policies which are no longer in line with our vision of advancing library excellence. Just as SMRLA's CEO no longer serves as the administrative officer for the public libraries of Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties, I believe it is time we evolve beyond requiring volunteers to serve on two boards simultaneously. By allowing SMRLA to recruit a Board that meets our organizational needs we will be better positioned to meet the needs of our public library partners.

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,

Ashley Teagle
CEO
Southern Maryland Regional Library Association