



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB0489

February 7, 2024

TO: Members of the House Ways and Means Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: HB 489 – Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding
POSITION: Supports

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 489.

HB 489 would extend the periodic increases to the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) per capita funding formula beyond fiscal year 2025. Under existing law, SLRC began receiving annual increases per State resident beginning in fiscal year 2017. Those increases continue through the current fiscal year and then remain at the fiscal 2024 level in perpetuity. HB 489 will provide additional increases to take place in each fiscal year through fiscal year 2031. These increases are necessary in order to allow SLRC to continue to operate at its current level of service.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central Library was designated to be the State Library Resource Center in 1971 to provide and expand access to specialized library materials and services that are necessary for coordinated, efficient, and economical library services in Maryland. Unlike most states, Maryland does not have a State Library making access to SLRC services critical to Maryland libraries and citizens across the state. In FY 2022, SLRC was visited nearly 150,000 times, answered more than 255,000 reference questions, loaned more than 300,000 items, coordinated more than 46,000 interlibrary loans, and provided access to specialized databases that were searched more than 10.6 million times. In addition, SLRC provided training for librarians and public programs on genealogy and Maryland history to the public which had a combined attendance of nearly 2,800 people.

SLRC coordinates library services around the state that are filling a critical demand from Maryland citizens for services for job seekers, small business owners, early literacy, after-school safe places, and free internet and computer access. Library services are vital to successful schools, strong communities and adult education and we encourage passage of this important legislation to assure their continuation. The services provided by SLRC benefits our most vulnerable residents most and helps them to access these critical

For the above reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 489.