



February 21, 2024

House Bill 785

Freedom to Read Act

House Ways and Means Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 785 – Freedom to Read Act. This Bill establishes a State standard for library operations to ensure that all public libraries follow uniform standards to ensure every Marylander has access to library materials, regardless of the author or creator’s background, origin, or opinions. This Bill will also protect our library employees and allow them to do their jobs without fear of retribution.

Libraries play an essential role in our community by offering a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment that provides residents with books, internet access, educational and cultural programs, and other essential services. Our residents go to libraries to learn new ideas, understand different perspectives, and explore their interests. However, these efforts will be undermined if libraries can exclude materials based on the background of their authorships or doctrinal disapproval. Libraries are centers that provide information and services for the enlightenment of all individuals. They themselves should not be the source of censorship.

Given the rise of politically motivated censorship, it is more imperative now that libraries are protected from extreme politics. It is the foundation of our democracy that people have the right to pursue their own interests, to learn new perspectives, and most importantly, to think and disagree freely. For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 785.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steuart Pittman".

Steuart Pittman
County Executive