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Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, Delegate Jones, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support the HB 0785 Freedom to Read Act to establish state standards for libraries that receive funding from the State. This act mandates all libraries to enact comprehensive policies covering collection selection, maintenance, and re-consideration requests. The act emphasizes strict adherence to those policies.

The Freedom to Read Act strongly reasserts the constitutional principle that library materials, services, and resources are essential for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all individuals served by the library. The selection of these materials, services, and resources is intended to be inclusive, representing the diversity of the community.

This legislation actively safeguards local control of the selection process, empowering libraries to operate within the defined scope set by their board and the state library.

While the majority of the public stand firmly against censorship, we have seen a national movement to constrain and censor library materials according to the standards of only a section of a community. There have been efforts to penalize or criminalize the crucial work conducted by library staff. Some of these challenges have reached Maryland. This proposed bill defends libraries and library staff from punitive actions for doing their work within the policies of their libraries.

The Freedom to Read Act protects library materials from intentional harm or restriction of access by individuals, acknowledging these items as communal property. Library materials, services, and resources are vital to successful schools and thriving communities. Please support the passage of this important legislation.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Sharon Sinsky-Hopkins*

Sharon Sinsky-Hopkins  
Board Member, Citizens for Maryland Libraries  
Trustee, Queen Anne's County Free Library