



**Ways and Means Committee  
House Bill 785  
Freedom to Read Act  
February 21, 2024  
Favorable**

Dear Chairperson Jones and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Allegany County Library System and the citizens we serve, I am writing in favor of **HB 489, Freedom to Read Act**. The Freedom to Read bill reaffirms the constitutional principle that library materials, services, and resources exist and should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment for all persons the library serves.

We have seen a national movement to constrain and censor library materials according to the standards of a small section of a community. There have also been efforts to penalize or criminalize the work carried out by library staff. The Freedom to Read Act 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. This legislation safeguards local control of the selection process, empowering libraries to operate within the defined scope set by their board.

The Act provides the framework for libraries and empowers them to develop collections to meet the unique needs of their communities without imposing specific title or topic mandates. Further, it mandates that all libraries craft comprehensive policies covering materials selection, maintenance, and procedures for reconsideration requests and emphasizes strict adherence to those policies. In addition, HB 785 defends library staff from punitive actions for doing their work within the policies of their library as well as protecting library materials from intentional harm or restriction of access by individuals, acknowledging these items as communal property.

By reaffirming the library's role for our communities, the Freedom to Read bill allows the Allegany County Library System to continue the great work we have been doing to improve and enrich the lives of our residents.

Thank you for your continued support of the great work of public libraries across Maryland and we ask that you favorably recommend HB 785 for passage.

Sincerely,  
John E. Taube,  
Executive Director