

HB 0489  
FAV -Support

The Maryland Association of School Libraries offers strong support of HB 0489, which seeks to continue funding for the invaluable educational resources and services provided by the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) to libraries and public schools throughout Maryland.

MASL would like to highlight the significant impact of the educational databases provided by SLRC. In FY23 alone, these databases were accessed over a million times in public K-12 schools and libraries across the state. Whether it's the Gale Educational Databases, Heritage Quest, or Mango Languages, these resources play a crucial role in supporting learning and research endeavors for students, educators, and library patrons.

However, it's important to note the financial challenges faced by the State Library Resource Center. The cost of the Gale databases increased substantially between FY21 and FY22, with expectations of similar increases in the upcoming contract negotiations. Despite these challenges, SLRC remains committed to providing these resources at no cost to libraries and schools, ensuring equitable access to high-quality educational materials for all Marylanders.

Beyond databases, SLRC also provides essential infrastructure support, such as high-speed internet connections to public libraries and government agencies statewide. This connectivity is vital for bridging the digital divide and ensuring that all communities have access to online resources and services.

Moreover, SLRC's collection of nearly 1 million items includes rare, historic, and Maryland-specific materials that are invaluable for research and preservation efforts. This collection sets SLRC apart as a unique resource within the state, enriching our understanding of Maryland's rich cultural heritage.

Additionally, the Maryland Interlibrary Loan (MILO) program facilitates statewide borrowing and delivery services, ensuring that library users have access to materials beyond their local branches. As delivery charges and operational costs continue to rise, it's crucial that we maintain funding for MILO to sustain this vital service for Marylanders.

SLRC's investments in expanding interlibrary loan delivery to underserved regions of the state not only benefit library users but also contribute to Maryland's economy by supporting local businesses and job creation.

SLRC's commitment to professional development for Maryland librarians is commendable. By offering free training and conferences on a variety of topics, SLRC helps ensure that library workers stay updated on best practices and continue to provide high-quality services to their communities.

In conclusion, the services provided by SLRC are essential for promoting literacy, supporting research, preserving our cultural heritage, and fostering economic growth in Maryland. I urge you to support HB 0489 to ensure continued access to these invaluable resources and services for all Marylanders.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Sturge, Advocacy Chair

The Maryland Association of School Librarians