



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

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Committee Members,

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) strongly supports **HB 785 Freedom to Read Act**, which codifies the state's commitment to professional library standards statewide, including principles for curating a responsible library collection, collection maintenance policies, and reconsideration requests. Importantly, it also protects library workers against retaliation for following those standards.

The Freedom to Read Act ensures that each library can tailor its collection to meet the needs of its community. Prince George's County Memorial Library System is proud to serve one of the largest and most diverse communities in the state, with a population that is 64% Black and nearly 21% Hispanic or Latino, according to U.S. Census data. Our collection of materials, for fulfilling the educational, informational, recreational, and cultural needs of Prince George's County, must reflect that diversity.

As with the provisions in this legislation, our Board of Library Trustees' approved Collection Development Policy prohibits the exclusion or removal of material because of the creator's origin, background, or views. While our professional library staff considers over a dozen criteria before selecting an item for our collection, we firmly believe that the choice of library materials and resources for personal use is an individual matter. Customers are free to not choose materials for their own use if they do not personally approve of them.

Prince George's County Memorial Library System developed the national award-winning Rock Banned awareness program to inform customers about intellectual freedom and draw attention to the increase in book challenges nationally. Now is the time to enshrine Maryland's protections for our library collections and workers. We ask that you **favorably recommend HB 785** for passage.

Sincerely,

Mark Winston, Ph. D.
CEO