

Testimony in Favor of
HB785
Hearing Before the Ways and Means Committee
February 21, 2024

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and distinguished members of the committee:

I join the voices of thousands of Maryland librarians, educators, and parents who are asking for your support of HB785, the Freedom to Read Act.

The Freedom to Read Act establishes basic guidelines for library collection policy while enabling local libraries to develop a collection that meets the needs of their community. This bill will ensure that students have access to the resources they need to succeed educationally, to develop strong critical thinking skills, and to become healthy, engaged, and productive citizens.

The Act recognizes the professionalism and trust that library staff and boards have earned from their community. It safeguards library staff, and strengthens the protections against harassment, willful theft or damage of the library materials and safeguards local governments from expensive and unnecessary litigation.

Most importantly, the Act protects each Marylander's freedom to access and read the material that interests them and ensures the continued excellence of Maryland's libraries. Thriving libraries are a requirement for thriving communities.

We applaud the General Assembly's work in codifying the significant role of libraries in Maryland by defining standards, supporting library professionals, and protecting the collections of Maryland's libraries from theft and destruction.

We support the passage of this legislation because it protects libraries from unconstitutional interference and ensures that Maryland's libraries will continue their outstanding service to the public for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration and we ask for a favorable report of HB785.

Sincerely,

Morgan Miller

Executive Director