



**Testimony in support of HB 489: Education - State Library Resource Center - Funding
Hearing before the House Ways & Means Committee
February 5, 2024
Submitted by Tonya Aikens, Howard County Library System President & CEO**

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express support for **HB 489: Education – State Library Resource Center - Funding**, which would ensure modest, periodic increases to the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) per capita funding formula beyond FY 2024.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central Library was designated the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) in 1971 to provide and expand access to specialized library materials and services necessary for coordinated, efficient, and economical library services in Maryland. Unlike most states, Maryland does not have a State Library, making access to State Library Resource Center services critical to Maryland libraries and residents across the state.

Howard County residents benefit immensely from the State Library Resource Center services.

- Our customers, including all Howard County Public School System students, have access to various educational databases, including Gale, Heritage Quest, and Mango Languages, provided at no cost to HCLS. The cost of these databases has risen dramatically. For example, the Gale databases have increased by 43 percent between FY21 and FY22, and we anticipate similar increases next fiscal year.
- Libraries, schools, and local governments throughout the state benefit from the high-speed internet connection service provided at no cost to recipients through the State Library Resource Center.
- SLRC has a collection of nearly one million items. Many of these items are rare, historic, or directly relevant to Maryland. No other library in the state can afford to purchase and maintain such items.
- Maryland library staff are required to maintain a number of ongoing professional development training credit hours to remain certified in the state. SLRC provides free trainings to help fulfill those requirements. In FY23 we provided hundreds of these trainings statewide and offered four professional development conferences for library workers.

Thank you for your past support of the State Library Resource Center, and we ask that you **favorably recommend HB 489** for passage.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens,
President & CEO