



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

**The Maryland Library Association supports HB 785 - Freedom to Read Act.**

This vital legislation is a crucial safeguard for our rights to information and open discourse, civil rights, civil liberties, and the integrity of our civil society while also fostering thriving libraries that cater to the unique needs of our diverse communities. In a time when information is abundant but censorship looms, the freedom to read is a cornerstone of civil liberties and democratic principles. The proposed Freedom to Read Act is not merely a legislative initiative but a declaration of the state's commitment to intellectual freedom, civil rights, and the integrity of its institutions.

The bill ensures all libraries have a policy for curating a responsible library collection that fits their community's needs, ensuring that libraries serve as inclusive and accessible repositories of knowledge. In addition, all libraries must have a policy that will dictate how they will handle material reconsideration requests. This bill also shields library staff from punitive measures for carrying out the duties of their jobs within their organization's own policies and procedures, protecting against unwarranted penalties. This bill does not dictate library content or commit a library to any external standards.

The Freedom to Read Act represents a crucial step towards preserving the freedom of information, upholding civil liberties, and safeguarding the integrity of libraries as democratic institutions. By enshrining principles of responsible collection curation, protecting against censorship, and affirming the rights of both patrons and library staff, the bill embodies Maryland's commitment to intellectual freedom and inclusivity. When the freedom to read is increasingly threatened, such legislative measures ensure that libraries remain bastions of diverse viewpoints, challenging ideas, and the foundation of a thriving democracy.

Thank you for your past support of Maryland libraries.

The Maryland Library Association asks that you favorably recommend HB 785 - Freedom to Read Act for passage.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Sutherland  
*President*

