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House Bill 489 Education
State Library Resource Center Funding
Ways and Means Committee
February 7, 2024
SUPPORT

February 5, 2024

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

The Talbot County Free Library strongly supports HB489 State Library Resource Center - Funding which provides necessary funding for the State Library Resource Center.

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

In FY22, SLRC was visited nearly 150,000 times, answered more than 255,000 reference questions, loaned more than 300,000 items, coordinated more than 46,000 interlibrary loans, and provided access to specialized databases that were searched more than 10.6 million times. In addition, SLRC provided training for librarians and public programs on genealogy and Maryland history to the public which had a combined attendance of nearly 2,800 people.

In FY23, SLRC provided public libraries across Maryland access to Gale educational databases which had 144,053 uses in public K-12 schools and 922,456 uses in public libraries. The cost for SLRC to provide access to these databases increased by 43% between FY21 and FY22. SLRC coordinates library services around the state that are filling a critical demand for services by job seekers, small business owners, early literacy, after-school safe places, and free internet and computer access. Library services are vital to successful schools, strong communities and adult education and we encourage passage of this important legislation to assure their continuation.

While the total funding for this program is small when compared to other education institutions, it has resulted in SLRC being able to support public libraries across the state. Investing in libraries is investing in employment, literacy, health, and the overall economy of all counties and jurisdictions in Maryland. I respectfully request that you fully support the State Library Resource Center's request for funding. SLRC provides direct support to the Talbot County Free Library (TCFL) by providing innovative programs to our patrons including programs on history and virtual reality, provides access to many eResources and databases that a small rural library could not afford on its own, provides regular staff development workshops and conferences, and provides access and coordination for thousands of interlibrary loans for our patrons that as a small library system we are unable to purchase for our collection among a number of other services. The support that SLRC gives in particular to small, rural libraries is invaluable.

Thank you very much for your continued support of Maryland libraries and the SLRC.

Sincerely,

Dana Newman
Director