

Dear Delegate Atterbeary, Vice Chair Delegate Wilkins, and committee members,

I am writing to you in support of (HB 785 / SB 738) also known as the Freedom to Read Act. This bill reaffirms the constitutional principle that library materials, services, and resources exist and should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all persons the library serves while protecting local control of that process, allowing libraries to thrive within the scope outlined by their board and the state library.

I write to you as a private citizen, but I am also a member of the Wicomico Public Library Board of Trustees, and the Eastern Shore Regional Library Board of Trustees. In these roles, I have learned much about the role of the library in today's society and the importance of protecting intellectual freedom. I firmly believe the Freedom to Read Act does just this.

Maryland's libraries have long been recognized as national leaders in developing successful, high-quality services and collections. One of the practices that has long been at the foundation of that success is the ability of each library to provide for its community the materials needed to meet the needs of the people in that region. While providing a framework for how a library should serve, (HB 785 / SB 738) protects the unique quality of each library and recognizes the quality professionalism of library staff.

The Freedom to Read Act charges governing bodies, such as library and school boards, to compose and adopt a written policy on library materials and to abide by that policy. The use of written operational policies is a long-recognized practice, foundational to any well-run public entity and often required by law. By setting general standards and requiring a policy without dictating the specific terms of that policy, The General Assembly demonstrates its ability to govern without mandating specific topics or titles which libraries must hold in the collection, allowing library professionals to do the job for which they are trained.

I urge your support of (HB 785 /SB 738), which not only provides a well outlined charge for what libraries should do and recognizes the skills of professional librarians and governing boards to work within that charge, allowing them to provide quality library services to their unique communities. This legislation will allow each library to successfully serve the needs of everyone in their community.

Kind regards,

*Maida A. Finch*

Maida A. Finch, Ph.D.