Maryland State Library Agency

BILL: HB 597   **DATE:** 2/4/2025

SUBJECT: Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding   **COMMITTEE:** Appropriations

SPEAKER: Morgan Miller, State Librarian   **POSITION:** Letter of Information

EXPLANATION

The State Library Resource Center (SLRC) provides training, programs, resources, and the state's inter-county materials lending service to public, school, and academic libraries. It also serves 24 municipalities, which receive access to high-speed broadband Internet through SLRC's statewide SAILOR service. This includes local government and EMS services. The SAILOR network was operational and functioning 99.91% of the time in FY24.

As the cost of services and operations increases, additional funding is needed to ensure SLRC can effectively serve library systems across the state. Current funding is $2.75M/year or $2.07 per state resident.

Amount being asked in FY26-FY31:
- Flat funded for FY26 at $2.07 per state resident
- FY27 - $2.15
- FY28 - $2.24
- FY29 - $2.33
- FY30 - $2.42
- FY31 and beyond - $2.52

In FY24, SLRC circulated 355,120 items throughout the state. The Sailor Database Consortium, available to all public libraries and public schools, was accessed 8.9 million times statewide. Approximately 284,000 people visited SLRC's physical location at the Enoch Pratt Free Library Central Branch in downtown Baltimore. Approximately 324,00 items were borrowed through Marina, the Statewide Interlibrary Loan Network.

SLRC saves the state money while providing access. SLRC's Gale Databases would cost a total of $4.6M for libraries and schools in FY24 if purchased individually. Because SLRC buys them at a consortium rate, the same number of people get access for only $618,000. SLRC provided 154 library trainings and public programs for statewide audiences, and had 5,778 participants. Those are all services SLRC provides with existing staff - no additional funds were expended other than minor mileage reimbursements, etc.

SLRC provides access to primary sources. SLRC holds copies of every Maryland newspaper, most dating from their inception to their last issue. It also provides access to public government documents and extensive genealogy resources. In addition, SLRC has a collection related to African American history, culture and lives. This includes circulating books as well as historic documents and other ephemera. Furthermore, Digital Maryland preserves materials from statewide historical societies, schools, cultural institutions and more. In FY24, 681,000 people visited the Digital Maryland website.

SLRC maximizes local and state investments across all Maryland Libraries. The state's inter-library loan system transfers thousands of materials to different county library systems every day, stretching funds spent on materials and ensuring broad access to information for all Marylanders. In FY24, more than 612,000 books and other items were sent to library users through the inter-library loan system. Furthermore, SLRC delivers staff development and learning opportunities for Maryland librarians, including continuing education classes needed for State of Maryland Public Librarian certification.