



MARYLAND

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SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

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HB 597

FAV

Dear Chair and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

The Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL), representing over 700 school librarians statewide, advocates for equitable access to high quality resources for all students. Our organization supports HB 597 to ensure continued and increased funding for the State Library Resource Center (SLRC). As an essential partner in supporting Maryland's students and educators, SLRC provides invaluable resources and services that enhance learning and access to information in schools across the state.

Over the past decade, school library funding and staffing have been significantly reduced. With database subscriptions running in the thousands, many school librarians have reduced the number of databases offered. Moreover, schools without librarians often do not purchase databases, further limiting student access to essential academic materials. Databases offer students an opportunity to access high-quality materials from academic journals, magazines, newspapers, and so much more. They give elementary students a secure space to learn search skills and high school students skills to become college and career ready.

In order to ensure that students across the state get access to these same opportunities, SLRC provides Gale databases to every school in every county throughout the state. In FY24 alone, the Sailor Database Consortium was accessed 8.9 million times statewide. These databases include some of the most trusted sources of information such as National Geographic KIDS and Peterson's Test and Career Prep.

Beyond the Gale databases, SLRC provides every student (and every Marylander) access to HeritageQuest Online for genealogy research and Mango Languages for self-paced language learning. Digital Maryland offers access to photographs, artwork, and historical documents, enabling primary source research for all Maryland students and residents, regardless of location.

The continued operation and expansion of these services require sustainable funding. Currently, SLRC receives \$2.75 million annually, which amounts to just \$2.07 per state resident. HB 597 proposes a necessary and gradual funding increase, ensuring that Maryland's libraries can keep pace with the rising costs of digital resources, broadband access, and essential educational programming.

We urge the Maryland General Assembly to support HB 597 to protect and enhance the indispensable services provided by SLRC to Maryland's students and educators. Ensuring adequate funding for SLRC is not just an investment in our libraries but in the future of Maryland's students, educators, and communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brittany Tignor

Treasurer, Maryland Association of School Librarians