



**House Appropriations Committee
HB678 Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library
February 21, 2025
Letter of Support**

Dear Chairman Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

This letter is in support of HB678 Requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$450,000 to the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library; and requiring the Deaf Culture Digital Library to submit its annual operating budget to the State Library Agency on or before June 1 each year.

The Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) is a unique and invaluable resource for the 1.2 million Maryland residents who identify as Deaf or hard-of-hearing. The DCDL website, the core resource for the program, functions as a digital library, resource center, information hub and connector for other organizations and entities. The number of active DCDL website users and electronic materials available to customers have increased steadily in recent years, with website usage and demand for materials projected to grow in the years to come. Since embarking on public training and programming efforts in 2020, the DCDL has significantly grown its public programs, including American Sign Language (ASL) instruction, technology and accessibility, author talks, and a virtual Summer Reading and Learning program.

Since the DCDL's inception in FY15, MSLA has allocated \$235,000 in general funds to support DCDL personnel and other resources. DCDL expenses exceed the current budget allocation and are projected to increase. Without additional funding, services to Maryland's Deaf and hard-of-hearing community will suffer, whether through reductions in DCDL programs, staffing levels, planned website enhancements, its digital collection, or training for Maryland public library staff to adequately serve this population. In order to cover DCDL funding gaps and maintain a basic level of services moving forward, MSLA may be forced to reallocate funds from other programs, limiting the effectiveness of the agency throughout the state.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB678 to help DCDL continue its important work throughout the State.

Sincerely,

Jonah Owens
Executive Director

info@carolib.org • www.carolib.org

Central Library
100 Market Street
Denton, Maryland 21629
p 410.479.1343 f 410.479.1443

Feddersburg Branch
123 Morris Avenue
Feddersburg, Maryland 21632
p 410.754.8397 f 410.754.3058

North County Branch
101 Cedar Lane • P.O. Box 336
Greensboro, Maryland 21639
p 410.482.2173 f 410.482.2634