January 29, 2025

The Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes

Chair, House Appropriations Committee

121 Taylor House Office Building

6 Bladen Street

Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for HB597- Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center – Funding
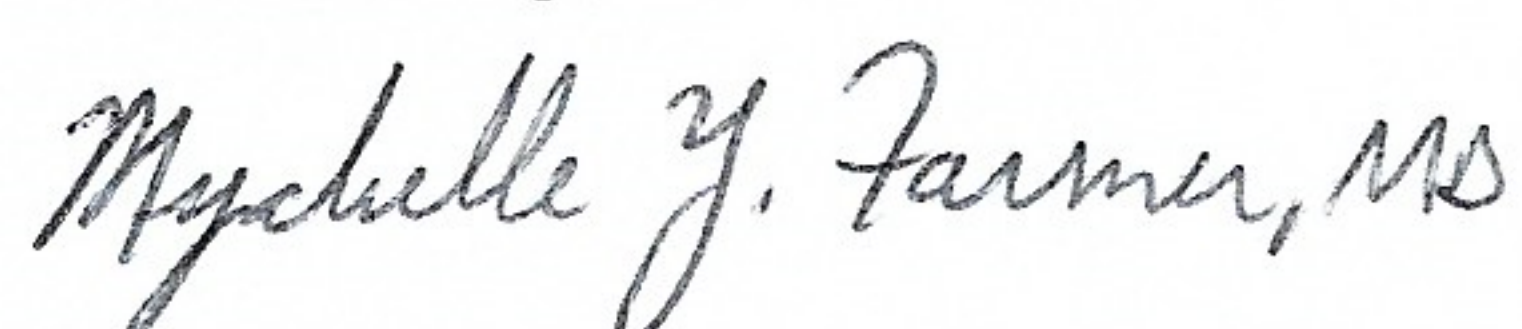
Dear Chairman Barnes:

I am writing this letter to support funding for HB597, State Library Resource Center Bill. This bill is structured to provide needed funding for the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) for FY26-FY31. Multi-year funding is critical for SLRC, as it seeks to achieve long-term goals and priorities for Maryland's libraries. Over 280,000 people visited SLRC's physical location, and over 355,000 items were borrowed in FY24. SLRC also maintains the Sailor Database Consortium, which is available to all public libraries and public schools. This database was accessed 8.9 million times statewide in FY24. Clearly, SLRC's services are well utilized and highly valued by Maryland's residents.

In addition to providing resources to individuals, this Center also provided over 150 trainings and public programs statewide, which were attended by 5,778 participants. I have attended the training previously, and as a result, I gained deeper knowledge about SLRC's resources. The training enhanced my capacity as a Chair of the Pratt Library. They also expanded my contributions to my community, such that I now encourage my neighbors and colleagues to take advantage of SLRC.

The Pratt Library has been an asset for statewide coordination of SLRC, as it serves as a vital hub for historical and cultural information through the Digital Maryland program. The accessibility of this program allows thousands to use it. Since these services are provided by existing staff, SLRC remains a cost-effective, and widely used Center.

I strongly support SLRC funding through HB597, to ensure future quality state library services.

Sincerely,

Mychelle Y. Farmer, MD

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Past Chair, Enoch Pratt Free Library

Vice Chair, Maryland State Library Board

cc: Delegate Dana Jones