



**Testimony in support of HB 597: Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding**  
**Hearing before the House Appropriations Committee**  
**February 4, 2025**  
**Submitted by Tonya Aikens, Howard County Library System President & CEO**

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

I am writing to express support for **HB 597: Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding**, which would ensure modest, periodic increases to the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) per capita funding formula beyond FY 2025.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central Library was designated the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) in 1971 to provide and expand access to specialized library materials and services necessary for coordinated, efficient, and economical library services in Maryland. Unlike most states, Maryland does not have a State Library, making access to State Library Resource Center services critical to Maryland libraries and residents across the state.

Howard County residents benefit immensely from the State Library Resource Center services.

- Our customers, including all Howard County Public School System students, have access to various educational databases, including Gale, Heritage Quest, and Mango Languages, provided at no cost to HCLS. SLRC's Gale Databases would have 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.
- Libraries, schools, and local governments throughout the state benefit from the high-speed internet connection service provided at no cost to recipients through the State Library Resource Center.
- SLRC has a collection of nearly one million items. Many of these items are rare, historic, or directly relevant to Maryland. No other library in the state can afford to purchase and maintain such items.
- Maryland library staff are required to maintain a number of ongoing professional development training credit hours to remain certified in the state. SLRC provides free trainings to help fulfill those requirements. Additionally, SLRC provides public programs for people across the state. In FY24 SLRC provided 154 library trainings and public programs for statewide audiences, for a total of 5,778 participants.

Thank you for your past support of the State Library Resource Center, and we ask that you **favorably recommend HB 597** for passage.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens,  
President & CEO