

House Appropriations Committee
HB597 – Public Libraries – State Library Resource Center - Funding
February 4, 2025
Support/Favorable

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of HB597 – Public Libraries – State Library Resources Center – Funding.

The State Library Resource Center (SLRC) provides valuable resources for the residents of Queen Anne's County. The Sailor Database Consortium provides access to educational databases that our library system could not afford if we had to pay for them out of our budget. In FY 24, these databases were accessed 511 times by our library customers. These databases provide a variety of information: genealogical research, learning a new language, full text articles from major academic journals, resources for elementary, middle, and high school research, and access to general interest periodicals and newspapers from the U.S. and around the world. If every library in the state had to purchase these databases individually, it would cost over \$4 million, but because SLRC can purchase them at a consortium rate, the combined total is only \$618,000. That is a significant savings and our library users in Queen Anne's County appreciate having them available.

SLRC runs our statewide interlibrary loan network, Marina. This service is invaluable to the smaller systems in the state, such as ours. Because we have smaller libraries, with less available space for books and other materials, Marina expands our collection by allowing our library users to borrow books from any library in the State of Maryland as well as from outside our state. In FY 24, Queen Anne's County Library users borrowed 3,005 items through the Marina network.

SLRC also provides internet access to our library system. In FY 24, our library internet had 70,000 sessions. Many residents don't have access to or can't afford internet access in their homes. The service provided by SLRC allows our library system to help bridge the digital divide in our county.

Queen Anne's County Library supports the passage of HB597. I respectfully ask for your support of this budget item, which will allow SLRC to continue to support Maryland public libraries and specifically the Queen Anne's County Library and our residents. By providing the proposed funding for SLRC, which is flat funded for FY26 at \$2.07 per state resident and increasing over the next five fiscal years (FY27 - \$2.15, FY28 - \$2.24, FY29 - \$2.33, FY30 - \$2.42, FY31 and beyond - \$2.52) our public libraries will continue to offer access to materials, services, and resources our communities need and want and to grow our services as our community's needs change.

Thank you for your consideration,

Janet Salazar
Director