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January 31, 2025

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
121 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT for HB597 - Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding

Dear Chairman Barnes,

It is my pleasure to write to you on behalf of the Maryland State Library Board and as a library executive who resides in Prince George's County to request your support for HB597 - Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding. The State Library Resource Center (SLRC), located at the Enoch Pratt Free Library Central Branch in Baltimore, serves a critical role in providing local public libraries throughout the state with information and infrastructure resources that are essential to meeting the everyday needs of Marylanders, from elementary school students and jobseekers to seniors and veterans. Without SLRC, library users would not be able to access training, programs, resources, interlibrary loan, and high speed broadband internet through the SAILOR statewide service. These centralized statewide resources represent a strategic effort of the state and Maryland State Library Agency to leverage available resources to supplement resources that are obtained at the local level. Local public libraries depend on SLRC to meet all of the basic service needs of their customers, from public internet to books.

As the cost of services and operations increases, additional funding is needed to ensure SLRC can continue to serve Marylanders through its 24 public library systems, school libraries, and academic libraries. HB597 would maintain flat per capita funding for FY26 and then include slight increases annually through FY31 and beyond. Investment in SLRC means maintaining the current access to the internet, educational resources and programs, and social services for Marylanders.

SLRC's positive impact on communities is clear. SLRC circulated 355,120 items throughout the state in FY24, with 324,000 items borrowed through the statewide interlibrary loan service. Databases that SLRC provides to local public library users were accessed 8.9 million times statewide, helping students complete research projects and local citizens conduct genealogy research. Another 681,000 users visited the Digital Maryland website that makes Maryland's local history and heritage available through digital collections. 284,000 customers also visited SLRC's physical location in Baltimore.

Thank you for your tremendous and sustained support of the essential role that public libraries and SLRC play in supporting Marylanders daily education, enrichment, and social services needs.

Most sincerely,



Nicholas Alexander Brown-Caceres

Member at-Large, Maryland State Library Board

Chair, American Library Association Public Awareness Committee