

House Appropriations Committee**HB 597 Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding****January 31, 2025**

Dear Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Committee Members,

I am writing to ask for your favorable support of **HB 597 Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding**. This bill provides necessary funding for the State Library Resource Center for FY2026-FY2031.

The State Library Resource Center (SLRC) provides a wealth of invaluable services to schools and public libraries across the state, such as the SAILOR Database Consortium, which provides access to educational databases at no cost to those institutions. These databases include Gale Educational Databases, the Heritage Quest genealogy database, and Mango Languages. These databases were accessed 8.9 million times statewide in FY24. Since SLRC purchases these databases at a consortium rate, the databases that SLRC paid \$618,000 for in FY24 would have cost individual schools and libraries \$4.6M.

Through its SAILOR network, SLRC provides internet connection services utilizing high speed fiber to 24 municipalities throughout the state at no cost to the recipients, including local governments and EMS services.

The Marina Interlibrary Loan Network (MILO), administered by SLRC, provides pickup, delivery, and coordination of borrowing throughout the state. Anyone in the state with a library card to any public library can request books from any other library, including SLRC. In FY24 324,000 items were borrowed through the Marina system, leveling the playing field for all residents to access the collections of libraries across the state.

SLRC staff will travel anywhere in the state to provide a range of dozens of programs for the public from any school or library, and also offers them virtually. Topics include: "National History Day Research", "Finding Health Information Online", and "Making a Difference: African American Women of the Civil Rights Movement." In addition to service to the public, SLRC provides hundreds of professional trainings for library workers each year. These trainings are vital for library professionals to meet their certification requirements. In FY24 SLRC staff provided 154 library trainings and public programs that reached 5,778 participants.

With a collection of nearly 1 million items, including many rare and historic items specifically relevant to Maryland, SLRC is able to provide access to materials across the state that no other library can afford to purchase and maintain. This includes large collections of primary source materials like entire runs of most

Maryland newspapers, government documents and genealogy resources, and a collection related to African-American history, culture and lives.

Costs for these services continue to rise, so it is vital that SLRC has the resources to continue their mission of serving all Maryland residents, students, and library professionals. Current SLRC funding is \$2.75M/year or \$2.07 per state resident. The request has that amount staying the same in FY26 with slight increases each year, topping out at \$2.52 per state resident in FY31. In light of the immense scope and importance of the services provided by SLRC, I'm sure you'll find that this funding gives tremendous "bang for the buck". On behalf of the Charles County Public Library I ask that you favorably recommend HB 597 for passage.

KennethWayne Thompson, Executive Director
Charles County Public Library