



HB 597
Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center – Funding
Testimony in Support
House of Delegates Appropriations Committee

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

As the Chief Executive Officer of Baltimore County Public Library, I write in support of **HB 597**. This bill will adjust the funding calculation for the State Library Resource Center, which provides training, programs, resources, and the state's inter-county materials lending service to public, school, and academic libraries. Baltimore County Public Library and our customers reap the benefits of this cost-effective and collaborative service every day, and an increase in funding is necessary so it can continue in the future, and without interruption.

SLRC offers a variety of important services, including Marina Interlibrary Loan, database access and high-speed broadband internet. Each one allows us to be more efficient in how we distribute our resources.

At Baltimore County Public Library, our collection is among the robust in the state; our 19 branches house more than 1.1 million items. Every collection has its limits, though, and we are happy that SLRC allows our customers to take advantage of the other incredible collections around the state via the Marina interlibrary loan system. We are also proud to assist customers statewide. In FY2024, Baltimore County Public Library circulated 62,595 items through this service, either by loaning materials to customers in other library systems, or by borrowing materials from other systems on behalf of our customers. Additionally, SLRC research databases available to public and school libraries throughout the state both promote equity of access and present a considerable cost savings to libraries. At Baltimore County Public Library, the available SLRC databases extend our database buying power by fifty percent, allowing our procurement professionals the ability to focus our resources on other materials for our collection. Essentially, SLRC helps us extend our collection beyond our doors.

Baltimore County Public Library also benefits from the SAILOR high-speed broadband internet network. We have 320 public computers located throughout our 19 branches; these are hardwired to the SAILOR network. In FY2024, nearly 100,000 customers used the public computers a total of 439,000 times over a period of 282,000 hours. These users include those with no high-speed internet or computer access at home, who may use our computers to do tasks such as job searching or studying for school. This kind of fast, reliable access is a critical service that public library customers have come to rely upon. Our association with SLRC and SAILOR plays an enormous role in our ability to provide this service.

In Maryland, our public libraries are among the best in the nation. The services provided by the State Library Resource Center factor heavily in this status. I strongly support funding SLRC at the necessary levels now and in the future, and I ask the committee to vote yes on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Salcantara', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sonia Alcántara-Antoine
Chief Executive Officer