

FAV HB1592 Regional Resource Center Funding SMRLA

Uploaded by: Ashley Teagle

Position: FAV

March 16, 2026

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of **HB1592 – Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries--Funding**. This bill will provide per capita funding increases to both regional resource centers like the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA) and public libraries around the state. Between FY 2025 and FY 2026, SMRLA's budget from the State increased by \$99,700. This increased funding helps SMRLA maintain services to the libraries in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties.

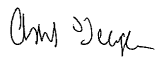
As Southern Maryland grows so does the demand for library services. This fiscal year, SMRLA was able to absorb increased costs for our services thanks to the per capita increase. For example, our materials delivery service which runs five days a week to eleven library branches throughout Southern Maryland increased in cost this year. By changing vendors, SMRLA was able to negotiate more predictable rate increases over a three-year period. Although these increases are reasonable, the cost of this service has generally gone up over time.

Looking ahead to FY 2027, I am aware of at least \$71,000 in anticipated increased costs. These increased costs are attributed to current vendor relationships that support our services. If SMRLA's per capita increase did not happen in FY 2027, we would have to pull back on investment in special projects and new initiatives for our public library partners.

A year without a funding increase would effectively be a budget cut for us. Our patrons have come to rely on and to expect high quality library service in Southern Maryland. In SMRLA's case, this is only possible because of the generous support that we receive from the State. As a regional library, we do not have a source of funding from the counties we serve. This makes per capita funding increases especially important to us.

Thank you for your favorable vote on HB1592.

Sincerely,

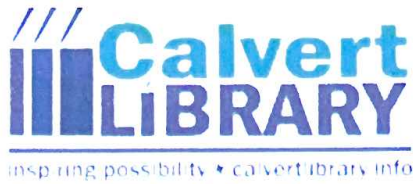


Ashley Teagle, CEO

Calvert Library_Support_HB 1592_Regional and Count

Uploaded by: Carrie Willson

Position: FAV



Carrie Willson, Executive Director • carrie.willson@calvertlibrary.info
850 Costley Way • Prince Frederick, MD 20678 • 410-535-0291 • 301-855-1862

BILL:	HB 1592	DATE:	March 18, 2026
SUBJECT:	Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries -- Funding	COMMITTEE:	Appropriations
TESTIMONY FROM:	Carrie Willson, Executive Director, Calvert Library	POSITION:	Support

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of **HB 1592 – Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/ Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services**, which provides modest per-capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and public library systems for FY2028–FY2032. This funding is essential to sustain the critical work public libraries provide across Maryland.

Calvert Library continues to feel the impact of challenging county budgets alongside growing community needs. During the pandemic, we invested in hotspots and Chromebooks to ensure residents could stay connected to work, school, and community—and that demand remains strong. Every day, our staff help customers build digital and information literacies, apply for jobs online, use downloadable resources, and access both physical and digital materials. Our public school teachers rely on students’ Calvert Library cards, which grant access to reliable information, primary sources, and a robust collection of downloadable books.

The Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA) and the other regional libraries are invaluable to Maryland’s rural counties. SMRLA provides our shared digital collection in Libby, professional development, IT software and support, cataloging and processing services, and daily delivery among the eleven locations in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary’s Counties. By centralizing these back-office operations, local libraries can focus resources on direct public service—an efficient model that yields an exceptional return on investment for Marylanders.

On behalf of the Board of Library Trustees, our dedicated staff, and our 35,000+ active cardholders, I respectfully urge a **favorable report on HB 1592**.

Sincerely,

Carrie Willson
Executive Director, Calvert Library



Barnes HB1592 Testimony

Uploaded by: Delegate Barnes Delegate Barnes

Position: FAV

BEN BARNES
Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

Chair
Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 19, 2026

The Honorable Benjamin S. Barnes
Chair of the House Appropriations Committee
121 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony of HB 1592 – Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding

Dear Chair Barnes,

House Bill 1592 – Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding extends the state funding share for local public library systems and the three regional library systems through fiscal year 2032 at an annual rate of 3% per capita for regionals and 3.21% per capita for local library systems. The current state share cycle ends in fiscal year 2027, at which time libraries across the state will face flat funding if the state share is not extended. They will struggle to meet the persistent and increasing needs of their communities for access to information, education, and opportunity.

State funding accounts for approximately 10 to 15% of a county library system's operating budget. For the three regional systems located in Eastern, Western, and Southern Maryland, state funding accounts for nearly all their operating budget and is directed toward brokering shared resources in counties where local funding alone cannot fully support a library system. These funds are critical for supplementing local funding to ensure our communities have access to high quality resources, facilities, and staff in every corner of the state.

In addition to extending state funding, this bill also updates programmatic requirements for libraries to receive funding, shifting prioritization from statewide pandemic recovery to

advancing new statewide initiatives that support early literacy and student success, closing digital equity gaps, promoting education and workforce development, strengthening communities and promoting civic engagement, and addressing mental health.

Despite representing only 0.17% of the state's entire operating budget, Maryland libraries provide an outstanding return on investment. Libraries are essential in times of economic uncertainty. Ensuring stable funding is vital for libraries to continue removing barriers, expanding access, and supporting all Marylanders.

I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1592.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Barnes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "B." and the last name "Barnes" clearly distinguishable.

Delegate Ben Barnes
Chair of the House Appropriations Committee

House HB1592_Ed_Goyda_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Ed Goyda

Position: FAV



SOMERSET
COUNTY LIBRARY
The Heart of the Community

BILL: HB 1592

DATE: March 18, 2026

SUBJECT: Education - Regional
Resource Centers and County Libraries -
Funding / Public Libraries – Young Readers
Matching Grant Program, Funding, and
Services

COMMITTEE: House Appropriations
Committee

POSITION: Support

SUBMITTED BY: Ed Goyda, Director,
Somerset County Library

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the Committee:

I am writing in **support of HB 1592 – Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding / Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding, and Services**, which is intended to extend per capita increases for the county libraries and regional resources centers through FY32. These funding increases will help sustain the important work that libraries perform in your local communities.

Maryland libraries provide robust access to a wide range of services to support lifelong learning, from developing a love of reading and early literacy skills for infants and pre-school children – hosting nearly 30,000 programs for ages birth through five, with total attendance of 900,000 – to providing a wide range of adult programs including workforce training, tax assistance, legal aid, and technology assistance.

Over the past decade, the increasing costs of providing library services (42%) has outpaced inflation (31.8%), driven largely by the increased costs of salaries and wages to ensure that libraries are staffed sufficiently to provide this wide range of services in our communities. Extending the increases of the state share allows us to continue to meet increased operating costs and public service demands.

Support for the regional resource centers is also vital to providing these services in small and rural counties. The Eastern Shore Regional Library provides a host of benefits to residents of Somerset County that the local library will be able to provide on our own, including more than \$500,000 worth of eBooks, premium databases, and audio and video content. The Regional Library is also vital in administering our collection management software, providing materials delivery, and providing a wealth of professional development opportunities.

We respectfully ask that you fund public and regional libraries at a level that will allow us to sustain our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

The Somerset County Library supports the passage of this budget item.

Sincerely,

Ed Goyda
Director
Somerset County Library

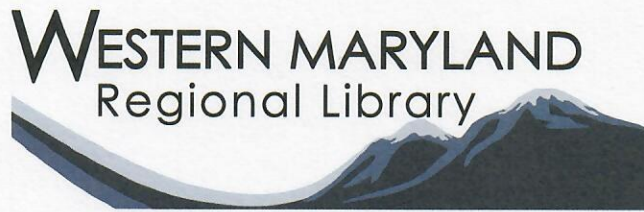
Crisfield • Princess Anne • Ewell

11767 Beechwood Street, Princess Anne, MD 21853
410-651-0852
somelibrary.org

HB 1592 - Regional -Public Library - Funding - 3-1

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Hulett

Position: FAV



Appropriations Committee

**HB 1592 Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding / Public Libraries –
Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding, and Services**

March 18, 2026

Support

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of HB 1592 Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding / Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding, and Services**. The bill will extend per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY32. These funding increases will help sustain the important work being done in your local communities.

Public Libraries, and the Regional Libraries that support them, are instrumental in maintaining connections for people all across the state. Regional libraries in particular provide equity of service to rural counties that otherwise would not be able to afford the same level of services offered in the more urban and populous counties. For example, the Western Maryland Regional Library (WMRL) provides the catalog system, online books and videos, web site development and maintenance, and delivery services to Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties.

As living costs continue to rise, Maryland libraries of all sizes continue to provide robust access to books, the internet and other technology, programs, and services for every member of the community. However, it is the rural libraries that suffer the most during economic downturns and it is the Regional libraries that are there to fill the void. Last year WMRL provided over \$1,383,863 in direct support and services to Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties. Over the past decade, costs to operate the Regional libraries have increased 37%. It is vital that our funding keeps pace with the inflation rate as much as possible to keep our rural libraries and their communities from falling behind.

The Maryland legislature has demonstrated over time its support of libraries and the critical role they play in the education and overall welfare of their communities. We ask that you continue this support during these extraordinary times when the citizens of Maryland need our services more than ever and back the passage of HB 1592.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth M. Hulett".

Elizabeth M. Hulett

Director

Western Maryland Regional Library

HB 1592 Education - Regional Resource Centers and

Uploaded by: Janet Salazar

Position: FAV



Centreville Branch: 121 S. Commerce St., Centreville MD 21617
410.758.0980
Kent Island Branch: 200 Library Circle, Stevensville, MD 21666
410.643.8161

BILL:	HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/ Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services	DATE:	March 18, 2026
SUBJECT:	Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – funding/Young Readers Matching Grant Program	COMMITTEE:	Appropriations
TESTIMONY FROM:	Janet Salazar, Director	POSITION:	Support

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

Queen Anne’s County Library supports **HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services**

Maryland public libraries rely on the state for annual operating funding to support library staff, infrastructure, services and programs. County library systems, on average, receive 18% of operating funds from the state.

The current funding cycle is set to expire at the end of FY27, after which the Queen Anne’s County Library (QACL) and our regional resource center, the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL) will receive flat funding. SB387 extends the state share increases from FY2028-FY2032 at an annual increase of 3% for ESRL and 3.21% for QACL. Without this extension, QACL and ESRL will be forced to make complex decisions that reduce the number of programs, services, operating hours, and staff available to help our community. It is critical for the state to maintain its support for our libraries.

Library services have significantly evolved over the last decade, and funding is necessary for QACL to keep pace with increasing demand. Between FY22 – FY25, the number of public programs offered by QACL increased by 89%, from 407 programs offered to 889. Program attendance also increased from 11,140 in FY 22 to 15,507 in FY 25. Public Wi-Fi use, a valuable service our community needs and uses, increased 43% from FY 23 – FY25. Our community’s use of digital formats has steadily increased as well; 35% from FY 24 to FY25.

Over the past decade, the cost of providing library services, our operating expenditures, has outpaced inflation – increasing by 42% for county library systems and 37% for regionals, compared to the 31% overall inflation rate. The largest factor across both conditions was the increased costs of salaries and wages. The demand for digital formats continues to rise as does the costs of e-materials, outpacing the scheduled funding increases.

QACL supplements the eroding social safety network. Our spaces are open to everyone and allow our community members a place to be when they have nowhere to go. QACL regularly provides access to health services and social services at our library branches through our partnerships with the QAC Health Department to regularly do health screenings and with the QAC Department of Social Services to allow some of their staff to offer services at our branches. We also partner with Eastern Shore Pro Bono to offer legal help to our community members who need it but may not be able to afford it. These types of partnerships are made possible through funding our library system.

As living costs continue to rise, QACL continues to provide robust access to books, the internet and other technology, buildings, programs, and services for every member of our community. Our library has thirty hotspots and ten Chromebooks available to check out for those in our community who don't have access to the internet or need a computer to work on from home. With access to a working computer and the internet, our community members can access job resources, write and send their resumes, apply for jobs and attend educational opportunities they would not otherwise be able to. When adults can access essential 21st century tools, they are competitive in the job market and can start to break the cycles of poverty.

Continued funding to support small and rural libraries through State Aid and the Regional Resource Centers is critical to support our community. QACL can provide access to homework help and tutoring through Brainfuse, which we are able to offer to our community through competitive pricing negotiated by ESRL. Funding for ESRL allows our smaller Eastern Shore public libraries to access databases and other resources at a lower cost than if each of our systems contracted separately with each vendor. We can support individuals looking for jobs or learning new skills through our Gale Courses and Test and Career Prep. Without access to these databases for free, many in our community would not have access to better jobs or be able to learn new skills to get better jobs.

QACL provides early childhood learning and family engagement to our community. In FY 25, QACL was able to present 254 birth-to-five early childhood learning programs focusing on early literacy training, socialization, physical education and learning about the world around us. These programs were attended by 3,562 children aged birth – 5 and 2,993 adults. In addition, the Library was able to provide 121 programs targeting children 6-10 years old that focused on reading engagement, science, art, learning the art of strategy, and technology, to better prepare our children for the world that awaits them in the future. These programs reached 1,231 students and 765 adults. We were also able to support children who are struggling to read by providing the Book Buddies program in our elementary school. The Book Buddies program trains volunteers to read a portion of a book to students during their lunch period once a week for four weeks. At the end of the program, each student chose a book to keep and take home with them to continue to read the story on their own. In FY25 this program reached 280 third grade students. This program fills the gap Queen Anne's County is experiencing with the reduction in Reading Resource Teachers in the public schools. These programs are possible because of the funding we receive from the State.

Queen Anne's County Library supports the passage of HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services. I respectfully ask for your support of this bill, which will allow our county public libraries and our regional resource centers to continue to support Maryland public libraries and our 3.3 million library card holders. By providing per capita funding in this budget cycle and increases through 2032, our public libraries will continue to offer access to information, materials, services, and resources our communities need and want.

Thank you for your consideration,

Janet Salazar
Director

HB_1592_March_2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Ranck

Position: FAV

WORCESTER COUNTY
LIBRARY

BILL: HB 1592 Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries Funding

DATE: March 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries Funding

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

SUBMITTED BY: Jennifer Ranck, Director
Worcester County Library

POSITION: Support

Dear Chair Delegate Barnes, Vice Chair Delegate Kaiser and members of the Committee:

I write in strong support of HB 1592 which extends the per capita increases for the county libraries and regional resource centers through FY32.

This continued funding will support small and rural libraries through State Aid and the Regional Resource Centers. Oftentimes, these libraries are the first to experience economic downturns while helping the communities most in need of library service. As living expenses continue to rise, libraries provide free access to books and materials, programs for all ages, the internet, and other technology, including laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots. We help people find employment and provide space for Marylanders to easily access services such as tax assistance, veteran benefits, and health insurance information.

Worcester County Library is fortunate to be a member of the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL). ESRL provides the eight county library systems on Maryland's Eastern Shore with daily delivery of library materials, IT support, essential training, and high-quality resource sharing. We depend heavily on the services they provide.

Libraries are foundational to education, economic opportunity, and lifelong learning.

I respectfully request that you support the passage of this budget item.

Sincerely,

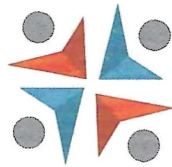


Jennifer Ranck
Director, Worcester County Library

HB1592_Support_WashingtonCountyFreeLibrary.pdf

Uploaded by: Jenny Bakos

Position: FAV



WASHINGTON COUNTY
FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet

March 18, 2026

Delegate Barnes, Chairman
Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and Committee members,

The Washington County Free Library supports **HB1592– Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services.**

Maryland public libraries depend on state operating funds to sustain essential services, including staff, infrastructure, technology, and community programs. While county library systems receive an average of 18% of their funding from Maryland, Washington County Free Library relies on the state for approximately 21% of its operating budget, making continued and predictable state investment especially critical to our ability to serve the community.

The current state funding cycle expires at the end of FY2027. Without action, libraries will face flat funding despite rising costs and increasing public demand. HB1592 extends the state share increases from FY2028-FY2032, allowing libraries to continue meeting operating costs and public service needs. Without this extension, library systems may be forced to reduce programs, services, and operating hours – directly impacting Maryland residents.

At a time when libraries are experiencing growing demand for public programs, digital, resources, Wi-Fi access, and community services, this legislation provides stability, sustainability, and equity across Maryland's library systems.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1592 and continued investment in Maryland's public libraries and regional resource centers.

Sincerely,

Jenny L. Bakos
Executive Director
Washington County Free Library

HB1592 - Letter of Support_CaroCoPubLib.pdf

Uploaded by: Jonah Owens

Position: FAV



For Caroline County, as well as every other smaller library system in the state, the increased funding for regional library resource centers is especially important. Regional resource centers serve as a force multiplier for Maryland Libraries, offering services, resources, and support to smaller and less wealthy counties that we would not be able to get elsewhere. The Eastern Shore Regional Library, for instance, provides eight counties on the Eastern Shore with Cataloging, IT, Programming, and Staff Development support, in addition to providing direct digital resources and database access to residents of all eight counties.

The Caroline County Public Library supports HB1592, and I hope that you will as well.

Sincerely,

Jonah Owens

Executive Director
Caroline County Public Library

info@carolib.org • www.carolib.org

Central Library
100 Market Street
Denton, Maryland 21629
p 410.479.1343

Federalburg Branch
123 Morris Avenue
Federalburg, Maryland 21632
p 410.754.8397

North County Branch
101 Cedar Lane • P.O. Box 336
Greensboro, Maryland 21639
p 410.482.2173

HB1592 Regional Resource Centers and County Fundin

Uploaded by: Lloyd Jansen

Position: FAV

Imagination Library of Charles County program. This initiative sends free books monthly to children ages 0-5 in partnership with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, boosting early literacy by creating a home library for each child in the program.

I respectfully ask that you adequately fund our regional and county public libraries by supporting HB1592. Thank you for considering.

The Charles County Public Library supports the passage of HB1592.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KW Thompson', written in a cursive style.

KennethWayne Thompson
Executive Director, Charles County Public Library

Harford County Public Library HB 1592 Testimony Su

Uploaded by: Mary Hastler

Position: FAV



Harford County Public Library

1221-A Brass Mill Road • Belcamp, Maryland 21017
410.273.5600 • Balto.Metro 410.575.6761
TDD: 410.838.3371 • FAX: 410.273.5606

DATE: March 16, 2026

BILL: **HB 1592** – Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Grant Program, Funding and Services

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

TESTIMONY FROM: Mary Hastler, CEO
Harford County Public Library

POSITION: **Support**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Committee

I am writing in support of HB 1592 which is intended to extend per capita increases for the regional centers and county libraries through fiscal year 2032. In addition, the amendments further update the statutory list of library services to reflect areas pertaining to early literacy, information literacy, digital equity and critical services.

These funding increases will sustain the important work that libraries perform in your local communities. Maryland Public Libraries provide robust access to a wide range of services to support lifelong learning, from developing a love of reading and early literacy skills for infants and preschool children – hosting 84,576 programs and classes for ages birth through five in 2024, with a total attendance of 2,171,049 (enough to fill Camden Yards 47 times over!) and providing a wide range of adult programs including workforce development, legal aid and technology assistance.

Support for the regional resource centers are vital to providing these services in small and rural counties, including eBooks, quality databases, and audio and video content, and providing opportunities for our children, families and communities.

Over the past decade, the increasing costs of providing library services has outpaced inflation and extending the increases of the state share allows us provide a level playing field for some of our most vulnerable communities. We respectfully ask that you fund public libraries and regional libraries at a level that will ensure sustaining equity and access throughout Maryland to our families and communities.

On behalf of the Harford County Public Library Board of Trustees, Library Staff and our community, **we strong support HB 1592 – Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Grant Program, Funding and Services.**

HB 1592 Education – Regional Resource Centers and

Uploaded by: Megan Sutherland

Position: FAV



House Appropriations
HB 1592 Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding
March 18, 2026
SUPPORT

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Kaiser, and Committee Members:

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) strongly supports **HB 1592 Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding**. The state funding provided in this budget is critical to the success of Maryland's public libraries and the communities they serve. The bill will extend modest per capita increases for Regional Resource Centers and Public Libraries through FY2032. Without this extension, libraries may be forced to make substantial cuts, including reducing programs, services, collections, and operating hours. At a time when we are seeing attempts to disinvest in libraries at the federal level, it is crucial that Maryland continue its strong support for public libraries.

Maryland public libraries rely on the state for annual operating funding to support library staff, infrastructure, services, and programs. PGCMLS receives approximately 25% of its operating funds from the state. Over the past decade, the cost of providing library services (operating expenditures) for county library systems has outpaced inflation (31.8%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm), increasing 42% (\$261,190,270 in FY 2014 and \$370,982,846 in FY 2024) in county library systems, and has increased 37% (\$6,662,332 in FY 2014 and \$9,134,334 in FY 2024) in the regional resource centers. SB378 extends the state share increases from FY2028-FY2032 at an annual rate of increase of 3% for regionals and 3.21% for county library systems. Extending the state share cycle ensures libraries can continue to meet increased operating costs and public service demands, including growing needs for internet access and ebooks.

Level funding after Fiscal Year 2027 would substantially and negatively impact public libraries across the state, including those in Prince George's County. More than 3.3 million Marylanders hold public library cards, including 643,523 PGCMLS cardholders. These Marylanders borrow over 53 million items from public libraries yearly, of which over 3.5 million were borrowed in Prince George's County last fiscal year. PGCMLS depends on the state aid administered through MSLA to supplement our local funding. State aid is critical to maintaining our operations across our nineteen branches. **PGCMLS supports the passage of HB 1592 - Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding as proposed.**

Sincerely,

Mark Winston, Ph. D. CEO

HB1592.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Blackwell

Position: FAV



March 16, 2026

Bill: House Bill 1592: Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding/ Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding, and Services

Committee: [Appropriations](#)

From: Michael Blackwell, Director, St. Mary's County Library

Position: Support

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Trustees, 74 employees, and thousands of card holders (including school student cards) of St. Mary's County Library, I urge you to support funding for county libraries. Maryland public libraries rely on the state for annual operating funding to support library staff, infrastructure, services, and programs. County library systems, on average, receive 18% of operating funds from the state. Regionals receive approximately 22% of operating funds from the state. In St. Mary's we receive 17% of our budget from the state; we rely on that funding to provide essential services.

The current funding cycle is set to expire at the end of FY27, after which these systems will receive flat funding. SB378 extends the state share increases from FY2028-FY2032 at an annual rate of increase of 3% for regionals and 3.21% for county library systems. Extending the state share cycle ensures libraries can continue to meet increased operating costs and public service demands. Without this extension, libraries may be forced to make difficult decisions that reduce the number of programs, services, operating hours, etc. At a time when we are seeing attempted disinvestment in libraries at the federal level, it is a critical time for the state to maintain its support.

Library services have significantly evolved over the last decade, and funding is necessary for libraries to keep pace with increasing demand. Between 2014 and 2024 (the last year for which data is available), the number of public programs has risen by 32% (64,185 in 2014 to 84,576 in 2024). Program attendance has risen by 21%, from 1,788,330 to 2,171,049; enough to fill M & T stadium 30 times over, or Camden Yards 47 times over. In St. Mary's, hosted 1,749 programs in FY 25, with an attendance of 35,535. This funding is vital for us to continue to serve so many.

Maryland public libraries now offer nearly 4 million e-books, an increase of 1480% since 2014. The cost of e-books is not expected to level off anytime soon, and the cost to provide sufficient material to meet demand will outpace both inflation and state funding levels. In St. Mary's, our ebook circulation in FY25 continues to grow, up 12% over last year, even as E-book demand continues to rise, as does the cost of e-materials, far outpacing scheduled funding increases,

As living costs continue to rise, Maryland libraries continue to provide robust access to books, the internet and other technology, buildings, programs, and services for every member of the community. Maryland's libraries support babies and pre-school children and their families/caregivers in developing a love of reading and early

Administrative Offices
23630 Hayden Farm Lane
Leonardtown, MD 20650
301-475-2151
FAX: 301-884-4415
info@stmalib.org

Charlotte Hall Library
37600 New Market Road
Charlotte Hall, MD 20622
301-884-2211
FAX: 301-884-2113
hall.manager@stmalib.org

Leonardtown Library
23630 Hayden Farm Lane
Leonardtown, MD 20650
301-475-2846
FAX: 301-884-4415
stma.manager@stmalib.org

Lexington Park Library
21677 FDR Blvd
Lexington Park, MD 20653
301-863-8188
FAX: 301-863-2550
lexi.manager@stmalib.org



literacy skills which set them up for school success. Maryland libraries hosted 29,742 programs for ages birth to five, with a total attendance of 886,277. Maryland libraries support pre-school and school age children with age and reading-level appropriate material in physical and digital formats. Across Maryland's libraries, children checked out nearly 18 million items in FY 2024. IN FY 2025, children (or their parents for them) checked out 432,358 items, helping to build life-long learning skills to ensure Maryland's future.

Maryland's public libraries are supplementing the eroding social safety net, expanding services to include Social Workers in the Library, free legal aid, criminal record expungement, tax assistance, food pantries and more. Marylanders can access more services more easily by using expanded outreach services, including more mobile libraries in neighborhoods providing local WiFi, STEM learning experiences, Makerspace learning, and easier access to collections. In St. Mary's our meeting and study spaces were used 7,692 times, providing an essential "third space" free to all.

Continued funding to support small and rural libraries through State Aid and the Regional Resource Centers is critical to supporting Marylanders. Regional libraries service small and rural libraries where local governments cannot fully fund the cost of operating them. Regionals work cooperatively to books, materials transit services, technology, databases, training and other services to member libraries. IN the Southern Region, our employees and patrons benefit greatly, with the Regional Library providing our catalog, materials processing, transportation of materials between branches, and so much more.

In a time of economic challenges, more than ever Marylanders rely on public libraries, and the regional libraries that support the public libraries, for materials to help inform and inspire, for connectivity online and to their fellow residents, and for innovative programming that addresses a broad range of needs. Supporting a small increase in funding for the five years after FY2027 wilk help ensure that Marylanders will grow, engage in self-development, and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Blackwell".

Michael Blackwell, Director, St. Mary's County Library

Administrative Offices
23630 Hayden Farm Lane
Leonardtown, MD 20650
301-475-2151
FAX: 301-884-4415
info@stmalib.org

Charlotte Hall Library
37600 New Market Road
Charlotte Hall, MD 20622
301-884-2211
FAX: 301-884-2113
hall.manager@stmalib.org

Leonardtown Library
23630 Hayden Farm Lane
Leonardtown, MD 20650
301-475-2846
FAX: 301-884-4415
stma.manager@stmalib.org

Lexington Park Library
21677 FDR Blvd
Lexington Park, MD 20653
301-863-8188
FAX: 301-863-2550
lexi.manager@stmalib.org

CE Ball 2026 - HB1592 - Education - Regional Resou

Uploaded by: Monica Perez

Position: FAV



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov
FAX 410-313-3051

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill 1592: Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to write in support of House Bill 1592, which strengthens Maryland's public library system by increasing per capita funding for regional resource centers and county library systems and modernizing required service offerings. This legislation represents a thoughtful investment in educational access, workforce readiness, and community well-being across our State.

HB 1592 increases per capita State aid beginning in fiscal year 2028, with phased increases through fiscal 2032. Under the bill, funding for regional resource centers rises by \$0.30 per capita in fiscal 2028 and by \$1.59 by fiscal 2032, while local public library systems receive an increase of \$0.61 per capita in fiscal 2028 and \$3.27 by fiscal 2032. These targeted increases will help libraries maintain essential services while expanding programming that supports literacy, workforce development, digital access, and mental health supports for residents.

The fiscal analysis indicates that statewide general fund expenditures will increase by approximately \$1.9 million in fiscal 2028 and \$8.0 million by fiscal 2031 as the funding adjustments phase in. Importantly, these investments directly benefit local communities, as State aid to local library systems is projected to increase by the same amounts during that period. For example, Howard County alone is estimated to receive an additional \$97,491 in fiscal 2028 and \$197,338 by fiscal 2031 under the revised formula.

In addition to strengthening funding, HB 1592 updates statutory service requirements so that libraries must provide at least one qualifying service in areas such as early childhood literacy, technology skills, workforce development, digital equity, emergency response support, or mental health and well-being. These updates align State law with how modern libraries already serve communities—as educational hubs, technology access points, and trusted neighborhood resources. Notably, most of these services are already offered statewide, meaning this provision is not expected to materially affect local expenditures.

Public libraries are among the most cost-effective public investments we can make. They support students, job seekers, entrepreneurs, seniors, and families alike, while strengthening community resilience and access to opportunity. By responsibly increasing funding and ensuring flexibility in



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

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FAX 410-313-3051

service delivery, House Bill 1592 helps libraries continue meeting evolving community needs without imposing undue fiscal strain on local governments.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation and for your continued commitment to Maryland's residents and communities.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Calvin Ball', is written over a horizontal line.

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive

HB1592 - KENT.pdf

Uploaded by: Natalie Hagan

Position: FAV



BILL: HB1592

SUBJECT: Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding / Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding, and Services

TESTIMONY

FROM: Natalie Hagan,
Executive Director, Kent County Public Library

DATE: March 16, 2026

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: Support

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

Kent County Public Library (KCPL) supports funding for the **House Bill 1592 Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding, and Services** .

Maryland public libraries rely on the state for annual operating funding to support library staff, infrastructure, services, and programs. County library systems, on average, receive 18% of operating funds from the state. Regionals receive approximately 22% of operating funds from the state.

The current funding cycle is set to expire at the end of FY27, after which these systems will receive flat funding. Extending the state share cycle ensures libraries can continue to meet increased operating costs and public service demands. Without this extension, libraries may be forced to make difficult decisions that reduce the number of programs, services, operating hours, etc. At a time when we are seeing attempted disinvestment in libraries at the federal level, it is a critical time for the state to maintain its support.

More than 3.3 Marylanders hold public library cards. These Marylanders borrow more than 53 million items from public libraries every year.

Library services have significantly evolved over the last decade, and funding is necessary for libraries to keep pace with increasing demand. Between 2014 and 2024 (the last year for which data is available):

■ Public Programs:

- The number of public programs has risen by 32% (64,185 in 2014
- to 84,576 in 2024)



- Program attendance has risen by 21%, from 1,788,330 to 2,171,049; enough to fill M & T stadium 30 times over, or Camden Yards 47 times over.
 - Maryland's libraries support babies and pre-school children and their families/caregivers in developing a love of reading and early literacy skills which set them up for school success.
 - Maryland libraries hosted 29,742 programs for ages birth to five, with a total attendance of 886,277.
 - Maryland libraries support pre-school and school age children with age and reading-level appropriate material in physical and digital formats
 - Across Maryland's libraries, children checked out nearly 18 million items in FY 2024.
- WiFi:
- In 2024, Marylanders accessed free public WiFi nearly 24 million times at public libraries, an increase of 657%, or more than 20 million more uses than in 2014.
- E-Books:
- Maryland public libraries now offer nearly 4 million e-books, an increase of 1480% since 2014.
 - The cost of e-books is not expected to level off anytime soon, and the cost to provide sufficient material to meet demand will outpace both inflation and state funding levels.

As a rural library system in Maryland, Kent County is particularly in need of continued funding to support small and rural libraries through State Aid and the Regional Resource Centers is critical to supporting Marylanders. Our regional libraries service small and rural libraries where local governments cannot fully fund the cost of operating them. Regionals work cooperatively to provide books, materials transit services, technology, databases, training and other services to member libraries.

Without them, we cannot continue to do what we do.

KCPL supports the passage of this budget item.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Natalie Hagan'.

Natalie Hagan

Executive Director, Kent County Public Library (KCPL)

HB 1592 Education - Regional Resource Centers and

Uploaded by: Peter Hobby

Position: FAV

Peter Hobby
369 Hemsley Dr
Queenstown, MD 21658

BILL: **HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services** **DATE:** **March 18, 2026**

SUBJECT: Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – funding/Young Readers Matching Grant Program **COMMITTEE:** Appropriations

TESTIMONY FROM: Peter Hobby, Board of Trustees, Queen Anne’s County Library

POSITION: **Support**

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

As a Board Member of the Queen Anne’s County Library, I support **HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services**

Maryland public libraries rely on the state for annual operating funding to support library staff, infrastructure, services, and programs. County library systems, on average, receive 18% of operating funds from the state.

The current funding cycle is set to expire at the end of FY27, after which the Queen Anne’s County Library (QACL) and our regional resource center, the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL), will receive flat funding. SB387 extends the state share increases from FY2028 - FY2032 with an annual increase of 3% for ESRL and 3.21% for QACL. Without this extension, QACL and ESRL will be forced to make complex decisions that reduce the number of programs, services, operating hours, and staff available to help our community. It is critical for the state to maintain its support for our libraries.

Library services have significantly evolved over the last decade, and funding is necessary for QACL to keep pace with increasing demand. Between FY22 and FY25, the number of public programs offered by QACL increased by 89%, from 407 programs offered to 889. Program attendance also increased from 11,140 in FY 22 to 15,507 in FY 25. Public Wi-Fi use, a valuable service our community needs and uses, increased 43% from FY 23 – FY25. Our community’s use of digital formats has steadily increased as well; 35% from FY 24 to FY25.

Over the past decade, the cost of providing library services, our operating expenditures, has outpaced inflation – increasing by 42% for county library systems and 37% for regionals, compared to the 31% overall inflation rate. The largest factor across both conditions was the increase in salary and wage costs. The demand for digital formats continues to rise, as does the cost of e-materials, outpacing the scheduled funding increases.

QACL supplements the eroding social safety network. Our spaces are open to everyone and allow our community members a place to be when they have nowhere to go. QACL regularly provides access to health services and social services at our library branches through our partnerships with the QAC Health Department to regularly do health screenings and with the QAC Department of Social Services to allow some of their staff to offer services at our branches. We also partner with Eastern Shore Pro Bono to offer legal help to our community members who need it but may not be able to afford it. These types of partnerships are made

possible through funding for our library system.

As living costs continue to rise, QACL continues to provide robust access to books, the internet, and other technology, buildings, programs, and services for every member of our community. Our library has thirty hotspots and ten Chromebooks available to check out for those in our community who don't have access to the internet or need a computer to work on from home. With access to a working computer and the internet, our community members can access job resources, write and send their resumes, apply for jobs, and attend educational opportunities they would not otherwise be able to. When adults can access essential 21st century tools, they are competitive in the job market and can start to break the cycles of poverty.

Continued funding to support small and rural libraries through State Aid and the Regional Resource Centers is critical to support our community. QACL can provide access to homework help and tutoring through Brainfuse, which we are able to offer to our community through competitive pricing negotiated by the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL). Funding for ESRL allows our smaller Eastern Shore public libraries to access databases and other resources at a lower cost than if each of our systems contracted separately with each vendor. We can support individuals looking for jobs or learning new skills through our Gale Courses and Test and Career Prep. Without access to these databases for free, many in our community would not have access to better jobs or be able to learn new skills to get better jobs.

QACL provides early childhood learning and family engagement to our community. In FY 25, QACL was able to present 254 birth-to-five early childhood learning programs focusing on early literacy training, socialization, physical education, and learning about the world around us. These programs were attended by 3,562 children aged birth to 5 and 2,993 adults. In addition, the Library was able to provide 121 programs targeting children 6-10 years old that focused on reading engagement, science, art, learning the art of strategy, and technology, to better prepare our children for the world that awaits them in the future. These programs reached 1,231 students and 765 adults. We were also able to support children who are struggling to read by providing the Book Buddies program in our elementary school. The Book Buddies program trains volunteers to read a portion of a book to students during their lunch period once a week for four weeks. At the end of the program, each student chose a book to keep and take home with them to continue to read the story on their own. In FY25 this program reached 280 third grade students. This program fills the gap Queen Anne's County is experiencing with the reduction in Reading Resource Teachers in the public schools. These programs are possible because of the funding we receive from the State.

In my role on the Queen Anne's County Library Board of Trustees, I support the passage of SB 378 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries - Funding. I respectfully ask for your support of this bill, which will allow our county public libraries and our regional resource centers to continue to support Maryland public libraries and our 3.3 million library card holders. By providing per capita funding in this budget cycle and increases through 2032, our public libraries will continue to offer access to information, materials, services, and resources our communities need and want.

Thank you for your consideration,

Peter Hobby
QACL Board of Trustees
phobby@gmail.com
301-704-3435

CCPL_Testimony_HB1592_3.16.26.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Wright

Position: FAV

BILL:	HB1592	DATE:	March 16, 2026
SUBJECT:	Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries-Funding	COMMITTEE:	House, Appropriations Subcommittee
TESTIMONY FROM:	Rachel Wright, Executive Director, Cecil County Public Library	POSITION:	Support

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Committee:

Cecil County Public Library (CCPL) fully supports funding for the **HB1592-Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries-Funding** which extends per capita increases for county libraries and regional resource centers through FY32.

State funding is critical to the success of Maryland public libraries and the communities they serve. With the current funding cycle set to expire at the end of FY27, failure to support the proposed per capita funding will negatively impact the crucial work libraries do to advance and uplift the millions of Marylanders who rely on them.

Public libraries are community hubs. They lead the way in providing programs, spaces, and initiatives that support the diverse needs of all Marylanders. Just last year, Maryland libraries reported 17 million visits – with each visit representing an individual who turned to their library for something they needed. When libraries support individuals and provide access to the resources, information, or technology they need to start a new business, get a better-paying job, or learn a new skill, libraries are raising up and advancing the entire community.

Public libraries prioritize access and inclusivity. They not only open their doors to welcome the community to brick and mortar locations across the state, but they also intentionally seek out those who lack transportation, who are underserved, or who are geographically isolated by taking mobile libraries and services directly to them. Whether visiting neighborhoods, shelters, community centers, or community events, libraries ensure all Marylanders, not just some Marylanders, have access to critical materials, resources, and information no matter where they are or what their circumstance may be.

As the cost of living continues to rise, Marylanders depend even more heavily on all that public libraries have to offer. State funding is critical to ensuring not only the success of Maryland libraries, but also the success of every Marylander who visits their library for resources, support, access, and information.

On behalf of our community and of all those throughout the state, Cecil County Public Library supports HB1592 – Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries-Funding.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Maryland libraries and communities.

Best,



Rachel Wright
Executive Director, Cecil County Public Library
485 Mauldin Avenue
North East, MD 21901

Testimony in support of HB1592 - Education - Regio

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB1592_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
03/18/2026
Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#1592 – FAVORABLE

Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding

TO: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#1592, Education - Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding

The National Endowment for the Humanities magazine Humanities has discussed *The Complicated Role of the Modern Public Library*¹

There aren't many truly public places left in America. Most of our shared spaces require money or a certain social status to access. Malls exist to sell people things. Museums discourage loiterers. Coffee shops expect patrons to purchase a drink or snack if they want to enjoy the premises. One place, though, remains open to everybody. The public library requires nothing of its visitors: no purchases, no membership fees, no dress code. You can stay all day, and you don't have to buy anything. You don't need money or a library card to access a multitude of on-site resources that include books, e-books and magazines, job-hunting assistance, computer stations, free Wi-Fi, and much more. And the library will never share or sell your personal data.

In a country riven by racial, ethnic, political, and socioeconomic divides, libraries still welcome everyone. ... That commitment to inclusivity, along with a persistent ability to adapt to changing times, has kept public libraries vital in an era of divisive politics and disruptive technological change.

In recognition of the roles libraries can play in Maryland, this bill will alter the calculation of certain funding for certain regional resource centers and each county public library system for certain fiscal years; alter the types of services of which each public library is required to offer at least one service to include programs to increase early childhood literacy and learning, school readiness, literacy proficiency, and student success, an education program to advance information literacy, and an initiative that increases digital equity and access to the Internet; etc.

Maryland citizens need these resources and Maryland values require the financial support needed to have them available to all our residents.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass HB1592.

¹ <https://www.neh.gov/article/complicated-role-modern-public-library#:~:text=In%20an%20update%20of%20Carnegie's%20idea%2C%20Klinenberg,the%20poor%2C%20the%20homeless%20and%20young%20people.%E2%80%9D>

HB1592-APP_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Sample

Position: FAV



House Bill 1592

Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: March 18, 2026

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1592. This bill would update the minimum required state and local funding for libraries and would better align the State's financial support to recognize the expanded role libraries play.

Libraries and regional resource centers increasingly serve growing purposes for Maryland's communities. Maryland's families seek these unique public institutions for educational and childcare support, access to technological resources and high-quality internet, labor and employment aid, and cultural enrichment. In essence, libraries and regional resource centers are a critical nexus of resources, community engagement, and enrichment unique to other community infrastructure – and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the need for maintaining and deepening the role they play in Maryland's communities. In short, our libraries and regional resource centers serve many more purposes for their communities than their original charge.

With an expanded purpose, however, comes greater need, which counties deeply understand. Local governments have long histories of exceeding mandated funding requirements and equipping public libraries with financial and operational support more than these requirements. They proudly do so because they know the success of local governments hinges on that of the families and communities they serve. Unfortunately, state support has lagged behind that provided by local governments, despite the growing need. HB 1592 offers an opportunity for the State to, once again, increase its financial support of these critical facilities to maintain levels of support that recognize the financial needs of libraries today.

Counties welcome increased partnership and support from the State, especially at a time when libraries and regional resource centers are serving new and evolving roles in their communities that necessitate deeper investment. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 1592 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

HB1592 (support) Wicomico Public Library.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Hershberger

Position: FAV



March 16, 2026

Chair Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Anne Kaiser, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

Re: Support for HB 1592 – Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding, and Services

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Committee Members:

On behalf of Wicomico Public Library, I respectfully submit this letter in support of HB 1592.


This bill is important because it continues the scheduled State funding increases for county library systems and regional resource centers beyond FY 2027, helping libraries avoid a flat-funding cliff while costs and public demand continue to rise. It also updates State law to better reflect the services public libraries now provide every day, including early literacy and school readiness, information literacy, workforce and technology instruction, digital access, emergency response, and support for mental health and personal well-being.

For Wicomico Public Library, reliable State support is essential to maintaining the core services our community depends on. Public libraries are expected to do more each year: support young readers and families, provide free internet and technology access, assist job seekers and small businesses, offer educational and cultural programming, and serve as trusted community spaces in times of disruption and need. These responsibilities have expanded significantly, even as operating costs for staffing, collections, technology, and facilities continue to grow.

HB 1592 recognizes both realities: that Maryland libraries need stable, predictable funding, and that the modern public library is a vital educational and civic institution. Continued State investment will help libraries sustain the services residents count on while allowing us to respond to changing community needs.

Wicomico Public Library appreciates the Committee's consideration and respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 1592.

Sincerely,


Seth Hershberger, Director
Wicomico Public Library

HB 1592 Education - Regional Resource Centers and

Uploaded by: Sharon Sinsky-Hopkins

Position: FAV

Sharon Sinsky-Hopkins
822 Thompson Creek Road
Stevensville, MD 21666
443-983-124

BILL:	HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/ Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services	DATE:	March 18, 2026
SUBJECT:	Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – funding/Young Readers Matching Grant Program	COMMITTEE:	Appropriations
TESTIMONY FROM:	Sharon Sinsky-Hopkins, Citizen	POSITION:	Support

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

I support **HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services**

Maryland public libraries rely on the state for annual operating funding to support library staff, infrastructure, services and programs. County library systems, on average, receive 18% of operating funds from the state.

I live in Queen Anne’s County. The current funding cycle is set to expire at the end of FY27, after which the Queen Anne’s County Library (QACL) and our regional resource center, the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL) will receive flat funding. HB1592 extends the state share increases from FY2028-FY2032 at an annual increase of 3% for ESRL and 3.21% for QACL. Without this extension, QACL and ESRL will be forced to make complex decisions that reduce the number of programs, services, operating hours, and staff available to help our community. It is critical for the state to maintain its support for our libraries.

Library services have significantly evolved over the last decade, and funding is necessary for QACL to keep pace with increasing demand. Between FY22 – FY25, the number of public programs offered by QACL increased by 89%, from 407 programs offered to 889. Program attendance also increased from 11,140 in FY 22 to 15,507 in FY 25. Public Wi-Fi use, a valuable service our community needs and uses, increased 43% from FY 23 – FY25. Our community’s use of digital formats has steadily increased as well; 35% from FY 24 to FY25.

Over the past decade, the cost of providing library services, our operating expenditures, has outpaced inflation – increasing by 42% for county library systems and 37% for regionals, compared to the 31% overall inflation rate. The largest factor across both conditions was the increased costs of salaries and wages. The demand for digital formats continues to rise as does the costs of e-materials, outpacing the scheduled funding increases.

QACL supplements the eroding social safety network. Our spaces are open to everyone and allow our community members a place to be when they have nowhere to go. QACL regularly provides access to health services and social services at our library branches through our partnerships with the QAC Health Department to regularly do health screenings and with the QAC Department of Social Services to allow some of their staff to offer services at our branches. We also partner with Eastern Shore Pro Bono to offer legal help to our community members who need it but may not be able to afford it. These types of partnerships are made possible through funding our library system.

As living costs continue to rise, QACL continues to provide robust access to books, the internet and other technology, buildings, programs, and services for every member of our community. Our library has thirty hotspots and ten Chromebooks available to check out for those in our community who don't have access to the internet or need a computer to work on from home. With access to a working computer and the internet, our community members can access job resources, write and send their resumes, apply for jobs and attend educational opportunities they would not otherwise be able to. When adults can access essential 21st century tools, they are competitive in the job market and can start to break the cycles of poverty.

Continued funding to support small and rural libraries through State Aid and the Regional Resource Centers is critical to support our community. QACL can provide access to homework help and tutoring through Brainfuse, which we are able to offer to our community through competitive pricing negotiated by ESRL. Funding for ESRL allows our smaller Eastern Shore public libraries to access databases and other resources at a lower cost than if each of our systems contracted separately with each vendor. We can support individuals looking for jobs or learning new skills through our Gale Courses and Test and Career Prep. Without access to these databases for free, many in our community would not have access to better jobs or be able to learn new skills to get better jobs.

QACL provides early childhood learning and family engagement to our community. In FY 25, QACL was able to present 254 birth-to-five early childhood learning programs focusing on early literacy training, socialization, physical education and learning about the world around us. These programs were attended by 3,562 children aged birth – 5 and 2,993 adults. In addition, the Library was able to provide 121 programs targeting children 6-10 years old that focused on reading engagement, science, art, learning the art of strategy, and technology, to better prepare our children for the world that awaits them in the future. These programs reached 1,231 students and 765 adults. We were also able to support children who are struggling to read by providing the Book Buddies program in our elementary school. The Book Buddies program trains volunteers to read a portion of a book to students during their lunch period once a week for four weeks. At the end of the program, each student chose a book to keep and take home with them to continue to read the story on their own. In FY25 this program reached 280 third grade students. This program fills the gap Queen Anne's County is experiencing with the reduction in Reading Resource Teachers in the public schools. These programs are possible because of the funding we receive from the State.

Queen Anne's County Library supports the passage of HB 1592 Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding/Public Libraries – Young Readers Matching Grant Program, Funding and Services. I respectfully ask for your support of this bill, which will allow our county public libraries and our regional resource centers to continue to support Maryland public libraries and our 3.3 million library card holders. By providing per capita funding in this budget cycle and increases through 2032, our public libraries will continue to offer access to information, materials, services, and resources our communities need and want.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sharon Sinsky-Hopkins
Citizen

HB1592_per capita Howard.pdf

Uploaded by: Tonya Aikens

Position: FAV



HOWARD COUNTY
LIBRARY SYSTEM

Learn. Grow. Connect.

**Testimony in support of HB1592: Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries-Funding
Hearing before the House Appropriation Subcommittee
March 16, 2026
Submitted by Tonya Aikens, Howard County Library System President & CEO**

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

I am writing to express support for **HB1592: Education-Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries-Funding**, which would ensure modest, periodic increases to per capita funding for each Maryland public library and regional library system through FY2032.

Maryland public libraries rely on the State for annual operating funding to support library staff, infrastructure, services, and programs. County library systems, on average, receive 18 percent of operating funds from the State, and regionals receive approximately 22 percent. In Howard County, we receive four percent, or \$1.3 million, of our operating funds from the State.

State funds are administered by the Maryland State Library Agency to all 24 Maryland public library systems and three regional systems. The current funding cycle is set to expire at the end of FY27, after which these systems will receive flat funding.

HB1592 extends the state share increases from FY28 to FY32 at an annual rate of increase of 3 percent for regionals and 3.21 percent for county library systems. Extending the State per capita increases provides the stability libraries need to effectively manage rising operating expenses and respond to increasing community demand for services. Without this extension, libraries may be forced to make difficult decisions about staffing, collections, and services.

Library services continue to evolve, and funding is essential for libraries to keep pace with increasing demand for its collections and services of all types for all people. Between 2014 and 2024 (the last year for which data is available):

- Public classes and programs:
 - The number of public programs and classes at Maryland public libraries increased by 32 percent (84,576 in 2024).
 - Attendance rose by 21 percent, from 1,788,330 to 2,171,049 – enough to fill M & T stadium 30 times over or Camden Yards 47 times over.
- WiFi:
 - In 2024, Marylanders accessed free public WiFi nearly 24 million times at public libraries, an increase of 657 percent.
- E-Books:
 - Maryland public libraries now offer nearly 4 million e-books, an increase of 1480 percent since 2014.

- The cost of e-books continues to increase, and the cost to provide sufficient materials to meet demand will outpace both inflation and state funding levels.

Over the past decade, the cost of providing library services has outpaced inflation*, increasing 42 percent in county library systems and 37 percent in the regional resource centers. While the total number of library staff has only increased slightly (2.9 percent), the largest factor (57 percent) was the increased costs of salaries and wages (\$68 million). For those Maryland public libraries who rely on State funds to help cover salaries, this per capita increase is critical.

As living costs continue to rise, Maryland libraries continue to provide robust access to books and materials, the internet and other technology, buildings, programs, and services for every member of the community. Maryland public libraries' everyday work aligns with the Moore-Miller Administration's priorities focusing on several major areas, including:

- **Education:** Libraries provide classes, resources, and services for children and their caregivers, from birth through grade 12. *For our state's youngest learners, libraries are uniquely situated and qualified to help prepare children for kindergarten. Before children attend school, they attend classes at libraries.*
 - *For infants, toddlers, and preschoolers*, regularly occurring classes help children learn social-emotional skills and language skills. Children learn by singing, talking, reading, writing, and playing.
 - *For slightly older preschoolers*, children learn to be creative, get along with others, listen, and the foundations of reading, as well as the basics of letters, numbers, and vocabulary. Children explore science, technology, engineering, math, and art, supporting the development of physical motor skills.
 - *For K to 5 students*, library experiences enhance their school lessons—including math and science—through the use of children's literature and creative expression, which support the development of cognitive, social, and communication skills.
 - *For middle and high school students*, libraries provide homework help, research tools, tutoring, and practice tests for AP exams, SAT and ACT tests.
- **Lowering Costs:** Libraries offer a myriad of materials, services and resources to the community.
 - Libraries provide access to free practice tests for higher education and career certifications (e.g., SAT, ASVAB, Realtor, nursing school), free online skill-building courses (e.g., LinkedIn Learning), access to broadband, free or low-cost printing, and more.
 - Additionally, more than 3.3 million Marylanders hold public library cards and borrow more than 53 million items every year. For individuals and families working to stay within their budgets, free programs, family events, and learning opportunities at the library offer real relief. Every dollar saved by borrowing books and other materials from the library becomes a dollar freed to put groceries on the table.
- **Economic Competitiveness:** Libraries are frontline workforce development hubs, offering free access to job search tools, resume and interview support, digital skills training, career coaching, certification prep and small business resources – all in trusted, welcoming spaces that remove barriers. They not only help people find jobs, they also help them build long-term skills and confidence.
 - In Howard County, our Project Literacy's Career Pathways for Skilled Immigrants program provides English classes, pathways to an external high school diploma, workforce development counseling, and job-related workshops.

Continued funding to support small and rural libraries through State aid and the Regional Resource Centers is critical to supporting Marylanders. Regional libraries service small and rural libraries where local governments cannot fully fund the cost of operating them. Regionals work cooperatively to books, materials transit services,

technology, databases, training and other services to member libraries. These libraries are the first to experience economic downturns, and the most in need of library services.

Thank you for your longtime support of Maryland public libraries. We ask that you **favorably recommend HB1592** for passage.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens,
President & CEO

**31.8 percent, according to https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm*

HB1592 Information Only Testimony Morgan Lehr Mill

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Position: INFO

House Bill 1592 – Education – Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries – Funding
House Appropriations Committee
Wednesday March 18, 2026
Information Only Testimony

Dear Chairman Barnes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on House Bill 1592. Maryland’s public libraries are among the most heavily used public services in the State, welcoming tens of millions of visits annually and providing essential educational, workforce, and community services to residents of every county.

Maryland public libraries rely on the state for annual operating funding to support library personnel, infrastructure, and services. County library systems, on average, receive 18% of operating funds from the state. Regionals receive approximately 22% of operating funds from the state.

The Maryland State Library Agency collects and analyzes library usage and financial data on an annual basis. The data shows that over the past decade, public library operating costs have risen by more than 40 percent, outpacing inflation. Library Directors report that personnel costs—the largest component of all library budgets—have increased significantly as libraries compete in a tight labor market for skilled staff who deliver literacy instruction, technology training, and community services. At the same time, the price of digital library materials, including e-books and databases, has increased dramatically, often at rates far exceeding inflation. Technology infrastructure, broadband connectivity, building maintenance, and public safety needs have also added new operational costs.

The annual incremental increases provided through the State’s per-capita funding program has helped narrow this operating funding gap. The new per-capita funding formula for county public library systems will result in a 17% increase for public library systems and a 16% increase for regionals over the next 5 years. These adjustments help restore purchasing power and allow libraries to maintain high-quality services for Maryland residents.

Importantly, this legislation also aligns funding with updated expectations for modern library service. The bill clarifies that public libraries must provide services that support early childhood literacy and school readiness, information and technology literacy, workforce and economic development, digital equity and internet access, community response during public emergencies, and programs that promote mental health and personal well-being.

These service areas reflect how libraries have evolved into comprehensive community learning hubs. Libraries now act as key partners in advancing literacy proficiency across the state, assisting adults with job searches and small business development, providing digital access for residents without reliable internet, and serving as trusted community spaces, especially during times of crisis.

The gradual funding increases proposed in this bill supports libraries to meet these modern service standards while maintaining the long-standing State–local partnership that supports Maryland’s minimum library program.

The Maryland State Library Agency appreciates the Committee’s attention to the sustainability of library services and offers this testimony for informational purposes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Morgan Lehr Miller".

Morgan Lehr Miller, MLIS
Maryland State Librarian