



HOWARD COUNTY
LIBRARY SYSTEM

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Testimony in support of SB0410: Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding
Hearing before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 16, 2026
Submitted by Tonya Aikens, Howard County Library System President & CEO

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express support for **SB0410: Public Libraries - State Library Resource Center - Funding**, which would ensure modest, periodic increases to the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) per capita funding formula beyond FY 2026.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central Library was designated the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) in 1971 to provide and expand access to specialized library materials and services necessary for coordinated, efficient, and economical library services in Maryland. Unlike most states, Maryland does not have a State Library, making access to State Library Resource Center services critical to Maryland libraries and residents across the state.

Howard County residents benefit immensely from the State Library Resource Center services.

- Our community members, including all Howard County Public School System students, have access to various educational databases, including Gale, Heritage Quest, and Mango Languages, provided at no cost to HCLS. The consortium rate paid is \$600,000, while the price for HCLS and all other library systems to purchase their own would be \$4.6 Million.
- Libraries, schools, and local governments throughout the state benefit from the high-speed internet connection service provided at no cost to recipients through the State Library Resource Center.
- SLRC has a collection of nearly one million items. Many of these items are rare, historic, or directly relevant to Maryland. No other library in the state can afford to purchase and maintain such items.
- Maryland library staff are required to maintain a number of ongoing professional development training credit hours to remain certified in the state. SLRC provides free trainings to help fulfill those requirements.
- In FY2025, SLRC responded to 267,704 reference inquiries, facilitated nearly 300,000 interlibrary loan transactions statewide, and enabled 1.5 million student database sessions. That scale translates into direct impact for our residents. When a Howard County community member requires specialized resources, SLRC ensures access. When a student needs authoritative research tools, SLRC delivers them.

This bill strengthens Maryland's library infrastructure. It protects equity across counties, and it safeguards access for our residents.

Thank you for your past support of the State Library Resource Center, and we ask that you **favorably recommend SB0410** for passage.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens,
President & CEO