

## **SB378 Education- Regional Resource Centers and County Libraries- Funding**

**Bill Name: Per Capita Funding**

**Sponsor(s): Sen. Guy Guzzone**

**Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 11th at 2pm**

**Committee: Senate, Budget & Taxation Subcommittee**

**Testimony Due: Monday, February 9th by 6pm**

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members,

I am writing in **support of SB 378 Education – Regional Resource Centers and Libraries – Funding**

This funding is critical for the important work being done by MD libraries. On behalf of the Board of Library Trustees, our over 101,000 regular card holders and the numerous visitors who stop by one of our 7 public service outlets, I respectfully urge you to support the funding levels in Senate Bill 378.

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.

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% and program attendance has risen by 21%, from 1,788,330 to 2,171,049; enough to fill M & T stadium 30 times over
- 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.
- Maryland public libraries now offer nearly 4 million e-books, an increase of 1480% since 2014.

Libraries did all of this while experiencing a near 31% increase in costs and 57% increase in salary expenses – which provided an average 2.9% yearly increase for salary.

Your support of SB378 will also ensure Maryland's regional libraries can continue providing these important digital services in addition to necessary training, IT, technical services, and material delivery for the rural areas of our state who need that support. Without the support of these regional libraries, many of our peer libraries in Maryland will not be able to meet their community's needs and would face significant cuts to their current public services.

Maryland's libraries have always been responsible stewards of our state funding, consistently doing more with less. We respectfully ask that you fund public and regional libraries at a level that will allow us to sustain, if not expand, our role in supporting equity and access in our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea

Andrea Berstler  
Executive Director