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Maryland State Library Agency

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Response to the Analyst's Review

House Education & Economic Development Subcommittee  
January 22, 2020

Senate Education, Business & Administration Subcommittee  
January 27, 2020



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**The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) welcomes this opportunity to share with the Committee some of its success stories and to address information in the analysis.**

The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) was established as an independent State agency effective July 1, 2017. MSLA administers State and Federal funds to support Maryland libraries in their mission to offer outstanding resources, programs, and excellent customer service. The agency provides leadership to promote planning and innovation in the development of library programs, encourage the ongoing development of staff expertise through education and training and promote resource sharing among all types of libraries. Responsibilities include oversight of: the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Maryland's Public Libraries, the State Library Resource Center, the three Regional Libraries, the Library Capital Grants Program, and the Deaf Culture Digital Library.

The **Library Capital Grants Program** assists in the funding of public library capital projects. The grant program continues to meet the goal of geographic diversity in the distribution of awards. Since FY2008, \$60,025,000 has been authorized to assist public library locations in 23 counties across the State which has generated an estimated \$350,000,000 dollars in local matching funds.

Five (5) new state of the art library facilities are currently underway or just completed in Anne Arundel, Cecil, Frederick, Montgomery and St. Mary's Counties with support from the State. In addition, the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) Phase II Renovations (located in the Central Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library) have been completed at an estimated expenditure of over \$99 million dollars in State funds plus a substantial amount provided by Baltimore City and the EPFL Foundation.

The **Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH)** is the primary source of books, periodicals and other information in formats such as Braille, large print, recorded books and the digital conversion of textbooks for students in higher education. LBPH offers an ambitious series of programs including a recent tactile tour of Ravens stadium, fine arts programs, technology programs, poetry readings, and outreach to various public library systems and health related organizations throughout the state.

LBPH continues to target outreach opportunities that are focused on the health care providers, caregivers, and families of citizens with print disabilities to increase its return on investment. LBPH has also increased its social media presence to better connect with health care providers, caregivers, family members, and potential patrons.

The Maryland State Library has recommended that the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped to the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled to reflect this change at the national level and provide a better idea of the customers it serves.

The **Public Libraries and State Networking Branch (PLSNB)** provides leadership in the area of library development to meet the library and information needs of all residents. Through statewide collaborative assessment, staff identifies library needs and provides for research and the distribution of findings, provides technical and professional assistance, collects and reports public library statistics, and coordinates marketing and outreach for libraries throughout the State.

PLSNB has oversight of and coordinates the **Maryland State Library Network**. The network provides Maryland residents with access to information through interlibrary loans; direct lending of resources through public, academic, special, and school libraries; technical assistance, staff training, and the coordination of marketing and outreach activities. The network encompasses Maryland's public libraries, the State Library Resource Center and the three regional libraries.

Libraries and library workers play an invaluable role within their communities by leading efforts to transform lives through education and lifelong learning. In many areas, the library is the only place that is truly accessible and inclusive for all. In 2018, libraries of all types worked diligently on programming to ensure that people of all types felt welcome and recognized. Libraries are in the midst of responding to two difficult societal issues affecting many of their communities. Homeless people rely on the public library for books, computer and internet access, and warmth. Staff at public libraries interact with almost as many homeless individuals as those at shelters do.

Homelessness and addiction are two of the most difficult issues facing communities today. They often go hand in hand. A few of our Maryland Public Libraries offer the services of social workers to assist people with this and other issues. In addition, MSLA now offers public library staff access to online Homelessness Training.

Every day, more than 130 people in the United States die from an opioid overdose. Addiction to opioids is a serious national crisis that affects public health as well as the social and economic welfare of American citizens. As its impact is felt in communities across the country, Maryland public libraries are jumping in to respond by using Narcan, an anti-opioid overdose drug, to save lives.

Many of the library services offered by Maryland Public Libraries strengthen local economies offering technology training to patrons in computer software use, online health resources, programs to help Americans identify health insurance resources and get better informed on health topics, programs that assist individuals to apply for jobs, create résumés, and prepare for interviews, and assistance with the completion of online government forms.

Public libraries are the place for lifelong learning providing online homework assistance, and summer reading programs for children. Public libraries create healthier communities providing programs on finding health insurance, and programs to help people find and evaluate health information. And, public library access equals opportunity offering access to the internet, free Wi-Fi, helping patrons with basic internet skills, helping people complete online government forms, and access to eBooks.

Maryland's Public Libraries continue to be among the best in the nation, ranking near the top in most measures of library effectiveness. While total circulation is down slightly overall, there are several changes since last year that start to tell the story of how residents are using libraries differently than they have in the past. More people see the value of libraries and are registering for library cards. Maryland Libraries created more programming and purchased more eBooks, and the attendance at our programs and the use of eBooks has gone up accordingly. More people are using computers at the library, and Wi-Fi use continues to increase.

Maryland's libraries are also stepping up to the plate to play an essential role in helping their communities be counted. The 2020 Census, for the first time in US history, will be conducted primarily online. Maryland public libraries are trusted organizations and community hubs, and as such, are in a key position to distribute information about the Census, reach hard-to-count populations, and serve as points of access for the new digital format. Maryland's libraries are supporting a complete count with comprehensive programming and outreach, connecting with families through targeted outreach for undercounted birth - 5 populations, hosting or participating in job fairs for employment with the Census Bureau, and keeping customers informed online and in their branches. Representatives from Maryland's public library systems are leading Complete Count Committees across the state, connecting Census partners to local communities. Additionally, the Maryland State Library is a member of the State Agency Complete Count Committee, working with Maryland Census to raise awareness and disseminate timely and accurate information to libraries statewide.

The 2018 Maryland public library statistics show that:

- 3.6 million, or 60% of Maryland residents, have library cards and are eligible to borrow from any public library in the State to meet their information and reading needs.
- Maryland residents borrowed a total of just over 57 million items — 15.8 items per registered borrower. The borrowing of e-materials accounted for 6.7 million of these transactions.
- There were close to 25 million visits to Maryland libraries in 2018.
- Librarians across the state answered 9 million questions.
- 100% of Maryland public library systems are connected to the Internet. Approximately 5,500 computers are available to the public through the 190 branch libraries and more than 5.3 million transactions were conducted in 2018.
- For many residents, Maryland libraries now serve as the primary access point for information services and technology.
- Maryland's libraries offered over 90,000 library programs, engaging 2.4 million Marylanders in lifelong learning, workforce development, and STEM education for youth and adults. More than a third of programs focused on early literacy, supporting Kindergarten readiness for close to 1 million of Maryland's youngest residents.

Public libraries continue to be a cornerstone of our democracy, serving the needs and interests of the community. They are deeply appreciated, especially for their role and impact in the community. Libraries are seen as having a mandate to take on an expanded role in public life and most parents highly value libraries as a resource for their children.

MSLA concurs with the analyst's recommendation and thanks the General Assembly for their support of the Maryland State Library Agency.