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**Maryland State Library Agency**

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**Response to the Analyst's Review**

**House Education & Economic Development Committee January  
26, 2022**

**Senate Education, Business & Administration Committee  
January 28, 2022**



**State Librarian**

**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 (MSL) 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 Print Disabled (LBPD), Maryland's Public Libraries, the State Library Resource Center, the three Regional Libraries, the Library Capital Grants Program, and the Deaf Culture Digital Library. To learn more about the Maryland State Library please visit our website at <https://www.marylandlibraries.org/>.

The Maryland State Library Agency is in its fifth year as an independent agency. This level of autonomy has allowed the organization to be agile in supporting the Maryland library community to create shared strategies to navigate challenges while continuing to provide exceptional service.

We are proud to report that in Fiscal Year 2021, the Maryland State Library Agency:

- Distributed nearly \$2.42 million in Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) federal grant awards to Maryland public libraries to support staff development, e-book collections, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, technology and WiFi hotspot lending, and more.
- Allotted \$3,319,475 in American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to provide enhancements to programming, services and collections across Maryland libraries to meet changing customer needs in light of COVID-19.
- Formally adopted the name change for the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD) on October 1, 2020. LBPD continued to provide daily mail and phone service to blind and low vision customers during the pandemic, despite the ongoing delays in mail delivery, thanks to the commitment of the LBPD staff.
- Supported the Maryland Public Library State-Wide Public Opinion Poll, showing that Maryland public libraries continue to be very highly regarded by the public. Respondents were aware of current library services, particularly Internet access. They believe that the library is a good investment of tax dollars, an essential service that provides them with the resources they want and need, and they want the state to invest more in public libraries.
- Launched the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library website.
- Sponsored the One Maryland One Book selection *The Book of Delights: Essays by Ross Gay*
- Continued its focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) through programs that highlighted racial equity and the development of an organizational culture in which everyone thrives. • Hosted the "What's Now: What's Next" webinar series which continued with Kristin Fontichiaro, University of Michigan iSchool, presenting "Communicating Impact 2: Helping Stakeholders See the Data in Your Story."
- Fulfilled its responsibility for the development, coordination and evaluation of services to youth (children and teens) and educational support, pre-K through 18, through early learning and youth services programs:

- Promoted the [2021 Maryland Summer Reading Program](#), “Tails and Tales,” included virtual participation for families and/or physical game boards provided at libraries and at community meal sites.
- Expanded the [Maryland Day by Day Early Learning Calendar](#) which now includes an engaging, interactive version.
- Produced the [2021 Virtual Teen Connect Week](#), highlighting teen-driven services and fostering discussion for strengthening teen voices in program and space planning, building partnerships, and supporting advocacy efforts for teens.
- Led the 5-week eCourse on [Computational Thinking](#) through the Young Adult Library Services Association’s (YALSA) Transforming Teen Services: A Train the Trainer Approach, and [Reimagining Youth/Library Services in our Communities in Times of Crises](#), a learning series that supports re-envisioning library services, was supported by the development of assessment tools.
- Developed an [early literacy curriculum called Hatchlings](#) offering guidance and support for expectant and new families surrounding literacy, language, and family engagement both in the library as well as out in the community.
- Held [MD TechConnect](#) (designed to bridge the various library technology worlds to be inclusive of all library staff in all types of libraries) which went virtual focusing on adapting library services in times of uncertainty and how libraries can reach their communities remotely.
- Created a [WiFi map of Maryland](#) developed by the State Library Resource Center to geotag all free library-hosted WiFi locations around the state.
- Supported statewide [cybersecurity awareness training for libraries](#), especially targeting social engineering, through the provision of the advanced edition of KnowBe4, a subscription training platform that allows users to receive training and testing in maintaining computer safety at home or in the workplace.
- Adapted the [Library Associate Training Institute](#) (LATI) to be held entirely online this year with a curriculum fully compatible with a virtual platform.
- Implemented a new [Electronic Grants Management System](#) (EGMS) to streamline the grants process for customers and MSL staff, and to have a central repository of grant documents.
- Participated in the national [Transformation for Libraries](#) pilot project, an American Library Association (ALA) initiative focused on increasing the public awareness of libraries and the critical role they play in transforming lives and communities through education. The Maryland State Library was one of five state libraries selected.
- [Celebrated the work of MSL staff and Maryland library staff excellence](#). [Nini Beegan](#), MSL’s Organizational Learning & Innovation Coordinator, was recognized for her innovative work by Library Journal in the [2021 Movers and Shakers](#). Three other award winners are from Maryland’s library community including Kathryn Funk, National Library of Medicine, who was recognized for her Innovative work; Brenda Johnson-Perkins, Baltimore County Public Library, who was recognized for her work in Advocacy; and Jennifer Sturge, Calvert County Public Schools, who was recognized for her work in Education.

Maryland libraries continued to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the ever changing needs required to protect staff and customers while still providing essential services to communities across the state through unwavering efforts to adjust hours of operation, services and programs. Libraries sustained and expanded efforts to extend WiFi beyond their buildings to help

residents' access vital Internet connections from parking lots and community spaces. MSL conducted a program about the opportunities of Television White Space (TVWS) as a way for libraries to bridge the digital divide by extending Internet access into the communities they serve. As noted in the analysis, MSLA is looking forward to participating with the Office of Statewide Broadband in the development of a plan to ensure that all state residents have the ability to connect to reliable broadband Internet.

Maryland libraries remain resilient and responsive to their communities' needs, and will continue to innovate and collaborate to provide crucial services to ensure that our communities are strong and well-positioned for a rapid recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. According to the Fiscal Year 2020 Maryland public library statistics, Maryland Public Libraries had over 3.3 million registered borrowers and 56% of Marylanders hold library cards. Although in-person visits to library buildings were down, libraries saw over 63,000 visits for contactless service with over 44.6 million items borrowed (both physical & electronic).

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.

The Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBDP), Maryland's public library for the blind and print disabled, also assisted college students in obtaining accessible college textbooks, taught patrons how to use assistive technology, and hosted a variety of virtual programs and events geared toward people with print disabilities. Through the braille e-reader pilot, LBDP distributed WiFi-enabled refreshable braille devices to patrons, leading to a 380% increase in downloads of digital braille books. As noted in the analysis, LBDP implemented Books on Demand (BoD), enabling patrons to get customized cartridges containing multiple books based on their preferences and requests. By June 2021, BoD accounted for over half of LBDP's monthly circulation.

MSLA continued to partner with library systems to bring together library staff from all types of libraries to discuss and share best practices and strategies for promoting and supporting diversity and inclusive practices throughout the state. The Maryland State Library was one of five state libraries selected to participate in the national *Transformation for Libraries* pilot project hosted by the Connecticut State Library with grant funding from the Institute for Museum's and Libraries (IMLS). And, the Maryland State Library Board approved the following statement, developed by staff from all levels of the organization, on equity, diversity and inclusion:

*The Maryland State Library Agency (MSL), which includes the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, is committed to providing services and benefits that align with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion principles in support of anti-racism, anti-ableism, access to information, privacy, and social justice for all.*

*MSL staff affirms its continued dedication to treating all people with respect and dignity. Our vision is to ensure that all residents and communities, from urban to rural, mountains to shore, and across the geographic, socio-*

*economic and demographic spectrum have equitable access to library resources.*

*We listen, learn, and respond to our patrons, partners, and employees to inspire library innovation and accessibility.*

MSLA concurs with the analyst's recommendation and thanks the General Assembly for their support of the Maryland State Library Agency and Maryland Libraries' efforts to serve the needs and interests of the community.