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Maryland State Library Agency

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Response to the Analyst's Review

House Education & Economic Development Committee

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Senate Education, Business & Administration Committee

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Irene M. Padilla
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 (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 Print Disabled (LBDP), 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 sixth 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 2022, the Maryland State Library Agency:

- **Maryland continues to be a national leader on issues such as legislation requiring publishers to make e-books and other digital literary content available to consumers at a reasonable cost.** While this landmark bill was ultimately struck down on appeal, Maryland libraries are at the head of a growing chorus of voices around the country working to provide access to in-demand e-material while being good stewards of public funds.
- The Office of Statewide Broadband has convened **the Maryland Broadband State Agency Collaboration Workgroup, including representatives from Maryland's library community.**
- Public library directors and their boards worked with consultants to produce a **Board Effectiveness Report**, which provides guidance on serving the needs and interests of the community to ensure that Maryland's libraries maintain their status as 21st-century libraries.
- Public libraries in Maryland can now make **all computers, public and staff, accessible to those who are blind or have low vision** through the purchase of Fusion licenses.
- The Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBDP) hosted the Office of the Inspector General for the United States Postal Service (USPS) to **discuss service delays with the delivery of Free Matter materials.** Inspectors visited LBDP and the central post office that serves the library to review their procedures for processing Free Matter and address concerns.
- MSLA, in partnership with MD Department of Veterans Affairs, was awarded the **Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award** for Serving Those Who Served – a public library program to expand veteran outreach and library personnel education in Maryland.

- MSLA funded approximately \$2 million in statewide Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grants focusing on staff training and development, as well as key initiatives to support essential library services to communities.
- MSLA received **approximately \$3.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds** to support Maryland's libraries in providing services beyond the branches, reimagining library spaces, addressing digital equity, and more.
- MSLA used ARPA funds to support the **purchase or renovation of 14 new mobile units**. Seven (7) counties will have new mobile unit service. Overall, mobile units are distributed across counties representing 82% of Maryland residents, an increase of 145%.
- MSLA 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.
- MSLA produced the second **Maryland Libraries Cultures Conference**, which focused on preparing staff for intellectual freedom challenges.
- The statewide programming initiative, **Maryland Libraries Together**, continues to leverage the collaborative nature of libraries in order to engage the communities that libraries serve in enriching educational experiences that advance an understanding of the issues of our time.
- Using funds from the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five from the Maryland State Department of Education, MSLA is working with Mother Goose on the Loose to develop the **Hatchlings program, which provides resources to expectant and new parents to encourage a love of reading**.
- MSLA continues to support **Summer Reading Programs** across the state. This year's theme is "Oceans of Possibilities," a perfect opportunity to welcome our new programming partners, the National Aquarium and the Maryland State Fair.

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 should comment on the completed MOU and how it responds to OLA's concerns.

As noted in the analysis, the Friends of LBPD is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization whose purpose is to support MSLA and promote awareness of LBPD. OLA's concern was that MSLA and Friends of LBPD were affiliated, and therefore an MOU would be warranted.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on February 16, 2023 by the MSLA and the Friends of the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, after review by MSLA's legal counsel. The MOU includes each of the items cited by the Office of Legislative

Audits, details the roles and responsibilities of each entity, and outlines how the two entities relate in a way that is compliant with the requirements of MSLA as a state government agency and the Friends as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

MSLA should comment on efforts to increase program offerings and attendance in calendar 2022 and 2023.

Data outputs reported in the MFR are noted as lagging behind by one year. Therefore, the downturns reflected in Exhibit 3 are one year behind. Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 should present an upturn, as most libraries were able to provide in person, hybrid and virtual programs to their customers.

Specifically for the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, FY 2022 marked a transitioning year. LBPD returned to in-person programs while continuing with virtual programming as well. A combination of factors including concerns with gathering in person and fatigue with online programs resulted in more offerings but fewer attendees. LBPD decided to put resources into podcasting, creating programs that patrons could listen to at their convenience. Comparing podcast listeners to traditional programming attendance shows double the engagement for the first quarter of FY2023 over the first quarter of FY2022.

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.