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Maryland State Library Agency

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Response to the Analyst's Review

House Education & Economic Development Committee

January 25, 2024

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://msla.maryland.gov>.

The Maryland State Library Agency is in its seventh 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.

The Maryland State Library Agency is proud to report that in Fiscal 2023:

- **The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Five-Year Plan 2023-2027**, required by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), allowed MSLA to actively address the community needs of Maryland libraries. MSLA worked with vested partners and community members to develop a vision for how the Agency will support public libraries for the next five years, including leadership, grants, resources, and training opportunities, with LSTA funds from IMLS.
- **The Young Readers Program Expansion Act** created a new grants program for MSLA which will help subsidize the distribution of books through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to more than 35,000 additional Maryland children under five.
- The mandate for **Maryland's Public Library Capital Grants Program**, established in 2008, was increased from \$5 million to \$7.5 million per year in FY 2023. Since FY 2008, \$82,325,000 has been authorized, which has generated an estimated \$370,000,000 in local matching funds. The Capital Grants program has funded not only important renovations but also opened 19 new libraries – approximately 10% of all Maryland public library buildings.
- 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.
- The Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBDP) **Books on Demand conversion** ensured that audiobook patrons have access to personalized cartridges with multiple titles on them, rather than the previous model of one cartridge, one title, **leading to an increase of more than 31% in borrowed items**.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- MSLA, in partnership with MD Department of Veterans Affairs and MD Department of Health, continues to work on an important program for **Service Members, Veterans and their Families** that has expanded veteran outreach and library personnel education throughout Maryland.
- Using funds from a Maryland State Department of Education grant, MSLA continued working with the organization Mother Goose on the Loose in support of 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 "Adventure Begins at Your Library."
- **The Maryland Broadband State Agency Collaboration Workgroup**, including representatives from Maryland's library community, continued its efforts to bridge the digital divide.

Public libraries continue to be a cornerstone of our democracy, serving the needs and interests of 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 intended use of the fiscal 2024 proposed deficiency allocation for the Baltimore City Young Readers Program and the Young Readers Matching Grant Program. The agency should also comment on when fiscal 2024 funding for both programs will be transferred from GOCPYVS to MSLA. For both programs, MSLA should provide a timetable for fiscal 2024 and 2025 awards

MSLA has hired a full-time, contractual Administrative Officer III who will begin working on January 31, 2024. The 2024 proposed deficiency (\$45,500) will be used to cover this position's salary for the remainder of this fiscal year. DBM advised MSLA that the best way to handle the transfer of funds from GOCPYVS to MSLA was to request a deficiency for the full-time position and, once the deficiency is approved in April, those funds can be transferred from GOCPYVS directly to MSLA. FY 2024 funds earmarked for Baltimore city residents in the GOCPYVS budget have been transferred to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL). \$454,500 will be distributed from GOCPYVS to DPIL pending final approval of the distribution plan from MSLA (Q3 FY 2024).

The timeline for FY 2024 is as follows:

- August 30, 2023:
 - \$246,193 in funds were distributed from GOCPYVS to DPIL for MSLA and SLRC for the Baltimore City Young Readers Program

- October 2023 - January 2024:
 - MSLA establishes standards for the distribution of grant funds to county affiliates with established programs to meet the stated goals of the legislation. This process included an analysis of custom surveys, focus groups and census data.
 - New Administrative Officer III starts.
- February 2024:
 - Standards for distribution of grant funds approved.
 - Grant funds are distributed to county affiliates with established programs throughout the State.
- April - June 2024:
 - MSLA staff work with county affiliates to encourage spending in high-poverty zip codes, as well as identify potential affiliates in un/underrepresented counties.
 - Develop metrics and benchmarks for program success.

The timeline for FY 2025 is as follows:

- Throughout:
 - Solicit feedback from affiliates, work with DPIL
 - Encourage the development of new affiliate programs and distribute funds to eligible entities.
- July 2024:
 - Distribute bulk second round of funding to eligible entities.
- July - November 2024:
 - Continue to work with current and potential affiliates to expand or create programs.
- November - December 2024:
 - Perform analysis on the impact of funding, prepare reports for the Governor's office.
- January - March 2025:
 - Develop plan for distribution of grant funds for FY 2026
- April - June 2025: Communicate plan for distribution of grant funds for FY 2026

MSLA should comment on the reason for the fiscal 2024 deficiency allocation for salary adjustments, including reclassifications to support pay equity and noncompetitive promotions.

In keeping with Governor Moore's goals outlined in the plan for Rebuilding State Government, agencies have been asked to review staff positions for necessary salary adjustments, equity reviews and non-competitive promotions for retention purposes.

MSLA's mission is to provide leadership and consultation in technology, marketing, funding, resource sharing, research and planning, so that Maryland libraries can fulfill their missions now and in the future to the people of Maryland.

In order for MSLA to fulfill its mission, the agency must retain quality, hard-working employees who are not only passionate about the agency's mission but have the resources necessary to be successful. Therefore, MSLA is in the process of reclassifying positions that have grown in responsibility over the course of the years as well as providing pay equity to eligible positions.

MSLA should comment on efforts to increase program offerings and attendance in calendar 2024.

With library closures due to COVID having ended, libraries are better positioned to host in-person library events, such as story times, book groups, author talks, and community celebrations at pre-pandemic levels. In-person programming has been a cornerstone of the work of Maryland public libraries, and is deeply valued and well attended by community members.

Being virtual-only during COVID shutdowns, many library systems became more effective users of social media to market and advertise library programs and services, which should help increase attendance as well.

Within MSLA, the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled has worked to increase programming through podcasts that are available asynchronously to all patrons. This has expanded access to programming for this statewide service. In addition, LBPD has increased the number of volunteers assisting with teaching one-on-one in-person classes about assistive technology, bolstering contact with our patrons. Combined with some in-person group programs, LBPD continues to engage more patrons.

MSLA and LBPD are working together to most effectively highlight and share information about the important work of the Agency. This includes the ongoing development of a Communications Plan that will provide a strategic framework to guide the Agency's communications and marketing efforts moving forward, including new offerings like blog posts, social media campaigns, videos and additional podcasts, along with the establishment of partnerships with allied organizations. MSLA and LBPD are making a concerted effort to produce more content and ensuring this content meets best practices for marketing and communications. Raising the profile of MSLA and LBPD is a priority and critical to build support moving forward.

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.