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**Maryland State Library Agency**

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**Response to the Analyst's Review**

**House Education & Economic Development Subcommittee**

**January 23, 2025**

**Senate Education, Business & Administration Subcommittee**

**January 27, 2025**



**Morgan Lehr Miller**  
**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) administers State and Federal funds to support Maryland libraries in their mission to offer outstanding resources, programs and 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: Maryland's public libraries, including three regional libraries, the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD), the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL), the State Library Resource Center, the Governor's Young Readers Program and the County Library Capital Grants Program. To learn more about the Maryland State Library, visit our website at <https://msla.maryland.gov>.

State funding is critical to the success of Maryland public libraries and the communities they serve. Public libraries are community hubs and state-of-the-art resource centers filled with new and relied-upon technology, services, tools and resources that help Marylanders thrive.

The state's 190+ public libraries focus on providing equitable access to information, services and education. Libraries deliver programs and events that support the community in a variety of ways, including: early-childhood literacy, youth mental health, technology assistance and digital access, workforce and small-business development, services for the military community and many other areas. Libraries are also active partners with numerous government and nonprofit agencies to connect citizens to vital services, including tax assistance, social services and health resources. Twenty-six mobile libraries bring Maryland's public library services, collections and Wi-Fi to customers. Libraries deliver all of these services in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The Maryland State Library Agency is proud to report:

- More than 3.2 Marylanders hold public library cards. These Marylanders borrow more than 50 million items per year from public libraries across the state..
- Maryland public libraries report nearly 16 million visits annually and answer approximately 3.5 million questions from the public. Attendance totals about 1.8 million annually for Maryland public library programs.
- Public libraries experienced a 78% increase in the number of programs offered last year with a corresponding 83% increase in program attendance.
- Public libraries saw an 89% increase in the number of children's programs offered with a corresponding 101% increase in program attendance.
- The Maryland State Library Agency hosted 65 continuing education programs for library staff on a variety of topics, including early-childhood literacy, workforce development, artificial intelligence, technology education, with attendance totaled 2,262 at these programs.
- MSLA leveraged federal dollars to fund innovation grants throughout the state to expand services in a multitude of ways, including telehealth, Wi-Fi in public parks, books by mail, community culinary education, mobile libraries outfitted with technology, learning opportunities for senior citizens and new programs for children and teens.
- The Governor's Young Readers Program continued to thrive with 39,000 additional children aged 5 and younger receiving free books thanks to increased State funding and MSLA's longtime partnership with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.
- MSLA continues to support Summer Library Programs to help students across the state avoid the "summer slide" in reading performance. Program participation in 2024 totaled 143,382 people, more than double the number of participants reported pre-pandemic.
- MSLA, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families, and Maryland Department of Health, continues to work on important programs for Service

- Members, Veterans and Military Families. This partnership has expanded veteran outreach and library personnel education throughout Maryland.
- The Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBDP) was named 2024 Library of the Year by the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled under the Library of Congress.
  - The State Library Resource Center reported:
    - 154 training and educational programs statewide to 5,778 participants, nearly double the amount of participants as recorded in 2022;
    - 612,306 items were loaned and borrowed statewide through the SLRC-operated MARINA inter-library loan network;
    - 284,039 in-person visitors to SLRC, an increase of 32% from 2023;
    - The statewide digital preservation program Digital Maryland saw 681,076 online visits, a 26% increase from 2023;
    - 300,897 reference questions were answered, an 11% increase from 2023.
  - The Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBDP) reported:
    - 6,514 active registered users
    - 458 new patrons
    - 612,000 items in collection
    - 30,000 items circulated monthly in every Maryland county
    - 340 LBDP-produced books on the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service
    - 7,578 Braille books in electronic and printed braille formats
    - LBDP's Maryland Accessible Textbook program served 74 blind and low-vision college and university students in Maryland, converting 1,314 chapters of textbooks and Open Educational Resources (OER) to accessible formats.
  - The Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) reported:
    - The number of active website users has increased by 78% since 2022 and is expected to grow to 21,000 over the course of the next year.
    - Electronic materials (ebooks and audiobooks) totaled 1,203 in FY24, a 53% increase since FY22, and the demand for additional materials grows daily.
    - Public training and programming is another primary focus area. Since embarking on these efforts in 2020, the DCDL has grown to serve approximately 750 participants a year through its public programs.

### **Proposed Deficiency**

**MSLA should comment on the need for these additional (Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library) funds, including an explanation of why the initial fiscal 2025 appropriation was insufficient, how the additional funds will be used, and whether this reflects ongoing funding needs for the program.**

The Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) program has received no additional state funding since FY2015, after its initial passage into Maryland law, yet requires MSLA to fund a coordinator and program specialist, maintain a website, purchase and provide resources, deliver staff training, offer programs, and establish both an Advisory Board and a Friends organization. To effectively manage these costs within the Agency's limited budget, MSLA developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Montgomery County Public Library (MCPL) to provide oversight of the program. MCPL is responsible for all human resources functions, including the hiring of specialized staff to manage and implement the program.

For the majority of the program’s existence, finding qualified staff that meet the legislative objectives has proven most difficult. Staff salaries are aligned with MCPL’s salary schedule. Currently, two full-time staff members are employed to deliver all of the aforementioned DCCL services to more than 1.2 million Deaf and hard-of-hearing Marylanders.

Over the past several years, MSLA has allocated \$235,000 in general funds to support personnel and other resources. This funding level initially was adequate to support the DCCL. However, due to the requirements for specialized personnel and planned increases in staff salaries that are tied to the union contract that MCPL staff have with the county, DCCL expenses exceed the current budget allocation. Furthermore, funds needed to support the DCCL’s increasing resource usage, expanded services and programming demands are extremely limited. The number of active website users has increased by 78% since 2022 and is expected to grow to 21,000 over the course of the next year. Electronic materials (ebooks and audiobooks) totaled 1,203 in FY24, a 53% increase since FY22, and the demand for additional materials grows daily.

Historic and projected operating expenses are captured in the chart below.

**Program Funding and Projections - FY 2023 - FY 2027**

	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2024</b>	<b>FY 2025</b>	<b>FY 2026 (Projected)</b>	<b>FY 2027 (Projected)</b>
<b>Salaries/Benefits</b>	148,015	246,178	270,797	297,877	327,665
<b>Contracted Services</b>	42,765	35,186	46,022	48,669	54,154
<b>Supplies</b>	23,522	15,000	15,000	18,000	20,000
<b>Other (indirect costs)</b>	20,698	29,636	33,181	36,454	40,181
Percent increase from previous year	XXX	38.7%	11.9%	10%	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235,000</b>	<b>326,000</b>	<b>365,000</b>	<b>401,000</b>	<b>442,000</b>

The Agency is grateful to the Governor for his support of the deficiency request to support DCCL. In addition, MSLA is working with legislators on an annual funding bill for DCCL to maintain long-term sustainability.

Additional funds requested through the deficiency will allow MSLA to meet staff salary requirements, as well as to support the cost of increased resource usage. If fully funded, we anticipate that DCCL will also be able to accomplish the following:

- Continue to enhance its digital platform by offering additional resources and titles;

- Be able to better provide resources to school-age children. This includes supporting them to access interpretation services and building virtual and in-person networks for Deaf and hard-of-hearing children to improve their social-emotional well-being;
- Increase public programming and partnerships;
- Support workforce development by working with partners to expand services to connect members of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community to job opportunities, networking events, job training, and entrepreneurship to close the employment gap; and
- DCDL staff will be able to participate in regional and statewide workgroups to ensure that issues for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are prioritized.

**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.**