



**RA11**

**Maryland State Library Agency - Capital**

**Maryland State Library Agency,  
Response to the Analyst's Review  
Morgan Lehr Miller, State Librarian**

**House Appropriations Capital Budget Subcommittee,  
February 23, 2026**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Capital Budget Subcommittee,  
February 24, 2026**

## **RA11 MSLA FY 2027**

### **Capital Budget Response to the Analyst's Review**

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

The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) wishes to express its appreciation to the General Assembly for establishing the Public Library Capital Grant Program in FY 2008, implementing a wealth-based cost sharing formula in FY 2014 and for increasing the funding mandate from \$5 million to \$7.5 million in FY 2023.

Fiscal 2027 is the 19th year that State capital grant funding will be available to public libraries in Maryland. Program priorities include geographic diversity in grant distribution and stimulating local support for library facilities development. All 24 library systems in Maryland have received State capital grant funding to improve one or more of their facilities. Since the inception of the program, more than \$109 million has been authorized, leveraging approximately \$382 million in local matching funds, or nearly four times the amount of the State's investment.

While the majority of the grant awards have funded basic, but critical renovations including roof, window and HVAC replacement, 21 new public libraries have been opened with State support. In 2026, two new libraries are scheduled for completion thanks to this program in Garrett (Friendsville) and Worcester (Pocomoke) counties bringing the total to 23.

MSLA's FY 2026 capital budget included another 3 new library facilities in Baltimore City (Park Heights), Frederick (West Frederick), and Montgomery (Clarksburg) counties *in communities that currently do not have a public library facility*. Funding is requested in FY 2027 for two more new libraries in Charles (LaPlata) and Washington (Williamsport) counties and to continue construction of the new libraries in Frederick (West Frederick) and Montgomery (Clarksburg) counties. Additional renovation and/or expansion projects are included in Cecil (Elkton), Dorchester (Cambridge), Queen Anne's (North County), and Wicomico (Salisbury) counties.

**Given the current fiscal climate, MSLA should comment on how it plans to manage funding within the mandate and prioritize new requests without exceeding the program's intended limits. The Department of Legislative Services also recommends that the fiscal 2027 GO bond authorization for the Public Library Capital Grant Program be reduced to the \$7.5 million mandated program funding level.**

**MSLA respectfully disagrees with the recommendation to reduce FY 2027 funding to \$7.5 million and urges the Committee to maintain the \$12.775 million proposed by the Governor for the County Library Capital Grant Program.**

As the General Assembly recognized by increasing the funding mandate to \$7.5 million in FY 2023, this grant program was not sustainable while funding remained flat at \$5 million annually for 15 years and construction costs continued to escalate. And since FY 2023, construction costs have continued to rise, including in just the past year as noted by the analyst in nearly every project description. As the analyst states, “The County Public Library Capital Grant Program is unable to maintain funding commitments to projects already selected for State participation without exceeding the program’s \$7.5 million annual mandated funding level... the Governor’s request has exceeded the mandate in three of the past four fiscal years. Over this period, the requested funding level totals \$43.8 million compared to \$30.0 million required under the mandate for a difference of \$13.8 million, or 46% above the mandated level. Large projects are a significant strain on the program. Five of the six projects selected for funding in fiscal 2027 exceed \$10 million in total estimated project costs, with three exceeding \$20 million. This makes it difficult to provide a meaningful State contribution while also providing State funding participation for smaller project requests. This is particularly challenging for projects located in low wealth jurisdictions that have a high State participation ceiling, like the proposed New Williamsport Library in Washington County.”

We are extremely grateful for the General Assembly’s decision to increase the funding mandate for the program. However, future funding requests for urgent and necessary projects will continue to exceed the mandated amount because the statewide need for library facilities development is tremendous as construction costs continue to increase.

The agency is currently accepting notices of intent from library systems to request FY 2028 funds. In addition to the continuing projects mentioned by the analyst, MSLA is aware of at least three additional new construction projects in Anne Arundel (Glen Burnie), Carroll (Elkridge) and Frederick (Linganore) counties, along with numerous library renovation projects across Maryland that will request State funding in the next cycle. This does not include any of the critical improvements to library facilities in Baltimore City at an estimated cost of \$51.1 million or the cost of \$337.5 million to address all necessary repairs at the Enoch Pratt Free Library system that were outlined in the 2024 Joint Chairmen’s Report. The only way the agency can accommodate statewide requests for library facilities is through increased funding for the program. The alternative is to defer funding for new projects while the cost of completing them escalates. During the FY 2026 cycle, more than \$5 million was deferred to keep our

total request within the mandate, which increased the cost to complete the projects in future budget cycles, including FY 2027.

The most recent statewide facilities assessment conducted by the Agency in November 2025 found that more than half of the 193 public library buildings in Maryland are over 25 years old. Repairs required due to aging infrastructure include new roofs, alterations for ADA compliance, replacement of HVAC systems and technological upgrades to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century library services. General renovation over the next 5 years will cost an estimated \$806,796,000, and 16 buildings have been identified for replacement with a new structure at an estimated cost of \$585,253,000.

MSLA urges the Committee to continue its investment in public libraries.

### **GO Bond Recommended Actions**

Reduce the \$12.775 million in general obligation bond funding to \$7.5 million for the Public Library Capital Grant Program.

**The agency does not concur.**