

**Testimony in support of
MSDE – Public Library Grant Program
A Hearing before the Senate Budget and Tax
Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 9, 2010**

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Senators:

Representing the **Citizens for Maryland Libraries**, I want to thank you for your **unanimous approval** of the County Public Library Capital Project Grants and ask for your support of full \$5 million funding of the program in FY 2011.

Maryland citizens love and use their libraries. In 2008, citizens made **33 million visits** to public libraries in Maryland. Public libraries are very busy providing access to computers, e-services, and e-commerce. In 2008, people used library computers 6.2 million times, in addition to accessing library WiFi service. Libraries are a major educational resource that supports lifelong learning, and helps children get ready to succeed in school.

There are **174 public library branches in Maryland** or **one library for every 31,943** citizens. **Most of these libraries were built at least 30 years ago. Many are well over 40 years old.** These well-loved buildings are in need of **renovation and repair**. Most have **inadequate space** to meet the current demands for service:

- **When many of these libraries were built, there were no computers in libraries.** Today, computers are in constant demand.
- **Since 1980, many new formats** such as CDs, DVDs and audio books have been added to the collection. Growing multiculturalism in Maryland has increased the demand for **books in multiple languages**. These new formats and collections require **specialized shelving and display space**.
- Today, libraries play a very important role in preparing children from birth to five to succeed in school by engaging them in activities that instill the joy of learning. **Emerging literacy areas** and story time areas are packed with young children and their parents and caregivers. These spaces are very different from library children's areas built 30 years ago.
- In order to maximize effectiveness of resources, libraries have added equipment such as **self-check machines, fax machines, and security systems**.
- **Programs for citizens of all ages, such as book discussion groups, story hours and computer training** have increased, putting more demand on meeting rooms and other gathering space within the library.

- In order to meet customer expectations, **vending machines and cafes have been added** which require additional space.
- There is **increased demand from the community for meeting room space in libraries.**

During the same 30-year period, thousands of new houses have been constructed and the **population has grown in areas where a library building is not readily available.**

Maryland public libraries are struggling to meet the demand for adequate facilities; yet local Adequate Public Facility Ordinances in Maryland do not include libraries; therefore it has been difficult for public libraries to compete for limited local capital funding. **The Public Library Capital Grant Program**, which requires local matching funds, is helping libraries address these growing renovation and construction needs not only by providing direct funding through grants, but also by **giving libraries a tool to leverage local funding to improve and construct public library buildings.**

Since the inception of the Capital Grant Program in FY 2008, more than \$11 million has been used, along with the local match, to plan for and make significant library infrastructure improvements in community libraries throughout Maryland. Based on the premise that \$5 million would be available to fund the grants, **library systems have submitted FY 2011 project applications for capital grants totaling \$7.9 million.**

Libraries in Maryland are good stewards of the funding they receive. They have a strong history of **partnerships and resource sharing**, which has resulted in **efficient use of funding.**

Citizens for Maryland Libraries **thank you** for your support of this funding, which will help public libraries better meet the economic, educational, reading and research needs of Maryland's children, families, small business owners and others who use our public libraries by the thousands on a daily basis.

Respectfully submitted by,
Patricia Fisher
President
Citizens for Maryland Libraries