

March 8, 2010

The Honorable Ulysses Currie  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 West Wing  
11 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: Support for County Library Capital Grants Program

Chairman Ulysses Currie and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of full funding for the County Library Capital Grants Program in FY2011.

The Capital Grants Program for libraries is critical to the rural counties in Maryland, where we face a growing population with limited budgets. We are continually looking for ways to leverage our resources. The proposed library capital funding allows us to persuade local decision makers and private donors to support 21<sup>st</sup> century library services and facilities.

The Somerset County Library System faces an ongoing challenge as demand for our free services increases during times of economic hardship. We see firsthand how the library impacts the quality of life for our community and we are committed to maintaining our essential services. We were delighted to see an 11% increase in foot traffic last year. But our success also brings challenges. Our facilities do not adequately serve the public. The Princess Anne branch library desperately needs a new boiler and we are continually plagued with leaking issues. The Crisfield branch library is less than one-third the size of our Princess Anne branch and has half the number of computers and no meeting room.

The Capital Grants program has been a tremendous benefit over the past several years. It has enabled us to work on a space reallocation plan to revitalize our Princess Anne branch and allowed us to pursue a new site for our branch in Crisfield. Without this program, we will not be able to move forward with these projects and will likely be in a holding pattern for years to come.

I urge the committee to fully fund the County Library Capital Grants Program for FY2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Ranck  
Director, Somerset County Library System  
410.651.0852, ext. 111 / jranck@somelibrary.org