

March 1, 2023

Chairman Guy J. Guzzone
Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building

Dear Chairman Guzzone and members of the Budget & Taxation Committee:

I am a Trustee and a member of the Board of Directors of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (the Pratt Library), where I serve as Vice-Chair. Among other committees, I serve on the Legislative Committee. I write to express my strong support for **SB 502 Enoch Pratt Free Library – Capital Project Funding** which would provide much-needed capital funding for library branches.

The branches of the Pratt Library are vital community hubs, helping to stabilize neighborhoods and providing a world of opportunities to users. In Baltimore City, where access to the internet is limited or non-existent, we help bridge our city's digital divide. Through partnerships with Legal Aid, the University of Maryland School of Social Work, and Morgan State University, our libraries provide customers access to social work and legal services. Our presence in the community allows learners of all ages access to information, and our meeting rooms offer non-profit groups space to meet on essential topics for the community.

The Pratt Library operates one of the oldest library systems in the United States, operating out of twenty-two locations of which nineteen—over 86 percent—are more than 50 years old (with six branches over 100 years old). Deferred maintenance adversely affects vital library services. In the last 18 months, we lost approximately 2,200 public service hours due to failing heating and air conditioning systems. The Pratt Library needs to address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and building code deficiencies. Pratt Library spaces need modernization to provide library services as required today. Flexible spaces are recommended to meet community's changing needs.

I support SB 502 fully and urge the committee to issue a favorable report that would result in improved library facilities that will serve Baltimore City customers for years.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alexander Koff
Board of Directors — Vice Chair, Enoch Pratt Free Library
Board of Trustees, Enoch Pratt Free Library

cc: members, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee