

An open letter to the Maryland General Assembly
Support of The Freedom to Read Act of 2024 (HB 785 / SB738)

As a Maryland resident and dedicated library worker, I wholeheartedly endorse the sentiments expressed in this testimony. Libraries are not just repositories of books; they are dynamic spaces where knowledge is cultivated and shared, essential for nurturing informed and engaged communities.

In my role, I witness firsthand the profound impact librarians have on shaping young minds and promoting critical thinking skills. We are the stewards of intellectual freedom, diligently curating collections that reflect diverse perspectives and ensuring equitable access to information for all. Our commitment to these principles is unwavering, as we believe that knowledge should be freely accessible to everyone.

The Freedom to Read Act of 2024 (HB 785 / SB738) is a critical piece of legislation that recognizes the vital role libraries play in upholding democratic values. By establishing clear guidelines for collection policies and bolstering protections against theft and damage, this bill empowers library workers to carry out our mission without fear of unwarranted interference.

Importantly, the Act also includes provisions to safeguard library workers from harassment and intimidation, acknowledging the professionalism and dedication of our staff. This protection is essential for ensuring that we can continue to serve our communities without fear of reprisal.

I strongly urge the Maryland General Assembly to swiftly pass this legislation. By doing so, they will not only uphold the principles of intellectual freedom but also reaffirm their commitment to supporting the essential work of library workers across the state. Together, we can ensure that Maryland's libraries remain vibrant centers of learning and discovery for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Arnessa Dowell