

February 22, 2024

Testimony on Senate Bill 738
Freedom to Read Act
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of almost 1800 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We urge you to support Senate Bill 738, to recognize and protect the critically important right of all Marylanders to access materials and resources expressing diverse views in public libraries regardless of their evoking ‘partisan or doctrinal’ controversy or opposition.

Senate Bill 738 adopts as standards for all libraries receiving state funds:

- (1) library materials, services, and resources exist and should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all persons the library serves;
- (2) a library should not exclude material from its catalogue because of the origin, background, or views of a person who created the material; and
- (3) (3) a library should not prohibit or remove material from its catalogue because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

The bill also provides specific protection for library personnel against any disciplinary or retaliatory action for adhering to these standards, and increases the penalty for any unlawful removal, detention, defacement or other damage to library materials or property.

Political or ideological censorship is anathema to the right of free expression protected in both the U.S. Constitution and the Maryland Declaration of Rights. Maryland Nonprofits is committed to supporting the values of equity, diversity and inclusion, and we strongly urge you to give Senate Bill 738 a favorable report.