



**Howard County Council's Budget Hearing**  
April 25, 2018

**Testimony in support of Howard County Library System**

*Louise Riemer*

*Chair, Howard County Library System Board of Trustees*

Good evening. I am Louise Riemer, Chair of the Howard County Library System Board of Trustees. On behalf of the Board, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HCLS.

As a strong advocate, you know the ways education promotes economic development, and contributes to our County's reputation for excellence. The Board is proud that Howard County Library System has become synonymous with high-quality public education for all. Our achievements are due in large part to you, as public funding makes us possible.

Thanks to those of you who were able to attend the recent grand openings of the East Columbia and Elkridge Branches. At East Columbia, the new teen center has attracted twice as many students as before, filling the space with elementary and middle school students working on homework projects every day and participating in HiTech classes. The size of the crowd for the Elkridge grand opening was on par with crowds for Black Friday doorbuster sales – it took more than 15 minutes for customers to enter the building following the ribbon cutting. They were thrilled with the new branch and eager to see the new DIY Education Center, borrow tools, books, movies, and music, attend classes, use the computers, and simply enjoy the wonderful new space. Thank you for your steadfast support of these two projects.

We now turn our attention to minor updates needed at our Glenwood Branch, which is nearing 20 years of age. Specifically, we need to add study rooms and classrooms, as well as update some of the very well-worn floors and surfaces throughout the building. One customer, an eighth grade student at Glenwood Middle School, commented, *"Having a study/project room would be useful because of lot of kids meet up and walk after school and have to discuss projects."*

Thank you for investing in our branches and for the many ways you demonstrate your support.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Riemer



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### Testimony in support of Howard County Library System *Tonya Kennon* *President & CEO, Howard County Library System*

Good evening. I am Tonya Kennon, President & CEO at Howard County Library System. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Howard County's more than 300,000 residents. They, like you, place a high priority on education—at all stages of life. I will speak to HCLS' operating budget request, while our Board Chair will address the capital budget.

Our proposed FY 19 budget places a high priority on a first-rate team of educators and support staff. We also look to sustain HCLS' popular instructional opportunities available through the many facets of our curriculum.

Howard Countians visited our six branches nearly 2 million times last year to borrow 8 million items—the highest borrowing per capita in the state and among the highest in the country. They also received expert research assistance 1.5 million times, and attended our classes and events 340,000 times – a 10 percent increase over last year. Classes such as Spring Science for preschoolers; Crazy 8s Math Club for elementary school students; HiTech and Homework Clubs for teens; and DIY classes at our new ElkrIDGE Branch & DIY Education Center for adults, to name but a few.

We thank the school system for collaborating with us to present academic competitions such as the HCLS Spelling Bee and its BumbleBee companion. We eagerly await Saketh Sundar's third consecutive appearance representing Howard County in the National Spelling Bee next month. Nearly 250 fourth and fifth graders have enrolled in the Rube Goldberg Challenge to complete an assignment requiring them to fill and close a container. And, as a number of you recently experienced, Battle of the Books included more than 300 enthusiastic teams (one-third of Howard County fifth graders!) competing not only for best score, but also awards for team spirit, name, and costume. This scholarly challenge has become a rite of passage for middle schoolers that improves reading comprehension, builds vocabulary, and teaches teamwork and good sportsmanship.

Lastly, as dissonance and partisanship continue to mark our national conversations, Choose Civility remains a vital platform for advocating for respect, collaboration, and unity, throughout Howard and the State. We invite you to the second annual Longest Table on June 16. Come share a meal, exchange stories, and build community with 500 people from across the county.

These are just a few examples of the hundreds of classes and events our community expects from its top-rated library system. Our budget represents less than two percent of the County's overall budget—a small contribution for a great return.

We appreciate that the County Executive's proposed FY 19 Operating Budget includes a 3.1 percent increase in County funding. This enables us to place a high priority on our first-rate team of educators and support staff. Our commitment to you—and to this community—is to deliver the best curriculum possible for as many as possible with the funding we receive.

We are proud to contribute in a major way to Howard County's reputation of providing excellence in education. A strong investment in public education for all is a strong investment in the economic success of Howard County,



today and in the future. Thank you for your continued confidence in Howard County Library System, and through that support, your commitment to our community's students of all ages.

Respectfully submitted,

Tonya Kennon