

Sayers, Margery

From: Allison Clark <a.clark3113@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 25, 2022 8:15 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Budget Testimony

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Hello,

My name is Allison. My daughter Krysta Clark testified today at the Howard County Council Budget Public Hearing. Because of the time limit, she did not get to share her full testimony. She and I would really like to share everything she thought about and worked on. It was the first time she has participated or spoken at something like this, and I am grateful for how warm and welcoming you all were and how wonderful an experience this was for her. Below is the full text of her testimony, written by her alone:

My name is Krysta Clark, I am 12 years old, and I live in Jessup. I wanted to speak today about the budget for the Howard County Public Library System. In order to explain why I think you should approve the funding, I want to share my story.

Reading to me has always been as natural as breathing. My love of books fed me in a way that video games and TV never could. But while other adults supported my passion, my peers often didn't. I was made fun of, I was called nerdy, geeky, and a bookworm. It was sort of lonely, having no one else who loved the authors that I loved or who liked reading much at all.

But when I was nine, I got a concussion. The only thing that rescued me from the boredom of lying in bed and staring at the ceiling was audiobooks.

Listening to one was the only thing I could do when I had a headache or didn't want to get one. But audiobooks are not cheap. They can range from twenty to forty dollars. This is where the library comes into view. They have audiobooks and Playaways galore. This made the library quickly become my main source of entertainment, freedom, and relief.

And when the COVID19 pandemic started my parents started homeschooling me and my siblings, the library closed and we (along with many others) were closed off from it and the many resources it offered. But when we found the website, we were thrilled and surprised to find it had just as many (if not more).

Being homeschooled is very isolating. To solve this problem, my parents decided to find us opportunities to socialize. And as I'm sure you can guess, this led to the library, specifically the Central Library.

My first class there was a quiet and shy one. It was a Black-Eyed Susan book club that continues today. It was a small group of three kids, myself, and Ms. Julie. We talked about the book Finding Orion. And when I went back home, I felt happy and heard. At the second meeting, I was more outspoken and self-confident.

But the really miraculous thing happened at the third meeting. We were nearing the end of the discussion and it somehow led to one of the people in the group talking about my favorite book in the world, House of Hades, saying they had read it like twenty times. I realized I had never met someone who had read anything by Rick Riordan except for my parents. At that moment, I felt less alone than I had in a very long time. And from there, things only got better. I joined a Teen Advisory Board at the Elkridge Library, ukulele classes at the Savage, and a Teen Meetup at the East Columbia branch. But the book club at Central still remains my favorite.

If there's anything I've learned from the books I've read, it's that you can and should always trust librarians. The Central Library only serves to point this out. I have never considered myself good at talking to people, acquaintances, or otherwise. But there's something about the librarians there that makes you feel welcome, and they look like they want to be there to help and have conversations with you.

I know that they listen to us from firsthand experience. At one of my book club classes, I absentmindedly said something about saving up to take Red Cross babysitting classes (that cost a whopping \$175, by the way!) My mom later got an email from Ms. Julie about free classes at the library for certification in babysitting from the University of Maryland. Honestly, I was astonished. Astonished and grateful that anyone had cared enough to personally reach out and let us know about this amazing opportunity. I also realized that this may cost the library extra money to hire those instructors. But it was worth it. Now, over twenty kids between the ages of 12 and 18 have been taught and certified to babysit safely and well.

If I were to design the new Downtown Columbia Branch Library, I would make it bigger with rooms or spaces designated for specific purposes. I know that at the ElkrIDGE Branch they have a cafe with vending machines and little tables. But on another level, Barnes & Noble is notable for its Starbucks cafe, and many visit the store just for that purpose.

I know as a babysitter that all little kids learn on different levels. I know my three-year-old brother has an especially hard time staying calm and quiet in libraries, and that can be distracting to people trying to read or study. For example, a colorful room with a whiteboard and literacy and counting activities would be perfect for ages 1-8. Along with that, it would work wonders for the characteristic peace of the library. As for teens, I think an area near the teen/young adult section with comfy chairs or big floor cushions and charging ports would be wonderful. I personally LOVE big libraries with little out-of-the-way corners where I can quietly read without any disruptions. I've also noticed that outdoor seating has become a popular thing with the newer libraries. So some shaded tables and trees and a garden would be beautiful. For the classrooms, I would make them bigger, and at least one of them soundproof. I know if the librarians feel like they can have classes that could be potentially louder (like music classes) it would make it easier for them to teach or hire other teachers.

In conclusion, I want to thank Ms. Julie, my favorite librarian, for having faith in me by asking me to speak at this function, and for supporting my ideas when I didn't myself.



HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL
AFFIDAVIT OF AUTHORIZATION
TO TESTIFY ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION

I, Antonia Watts, have been duly authorized by
(name of individual)

Howard County Library System Board of Trustees to deliver testimony to the
(name of nonprofit organization or government board, commission, or task force)

County Council regarding HCLS Proposed Budget to express the organization's
(bill or resolution number)

support for / opposition to / request to amend this legislation.
(Please circle one.)

Printed Name: Antonia Watts

Signature: 

Date: 4/19/2022

Organization: Howard County Library System

Organization Address: 9411 Frederick Road Ellicott City, MD 21042

9411 Frederick Road Ellicott City, MD 21042

Number of Members: 7

Name of Chair/President: Tom Munns

*This form can be submitted electronically via email to
councilmail@howardcountymd.gov no later than 2 hours prior to the start of the
Public Hearing.*



HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL
AFFIDAVIT OF AUTHORIZATION
TO TESTIFY ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION

I, Tonya Aikens, have been duly authorized by
(name of individual)

Howard County Library System to deliver testimony to the
(name of nonprofit organization or government board, commission, or task force)

County Council regarding Library's Proposed Budget to express the organization's
(bill or resolution number)

support for / opposition to / request to amend this legislation.
(Please circle one.)

Printed Name: Tonya Aikens

Signature: 

Date: 4/20/2022

Organization: Howard County Library System

Organization Address: 9411 Frederick Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042

9411 Frederick Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042

Number of Members: 200

Name of Chair/President: Tonya Aikens

This form can be submitted electronically via email to councilmail@howardcountymd.gov no later than 5pm the day of the Public Hearing or delivered in person the night of the Public Hearing before testifying.