

Legislative Agenda 2023
of the
Mary Riley Styles Public Library Board of Trustees

Priority for Funding

1. Fully Fund State Aid for Public Libraries to improve services in every community across the Commonwealth.

The Library Board of Trustees for the Mary Riley Styles Public Library urges the Legislature to fully fund its State Aid for Public Libraries program as called for in the Code of Virginia. Public Libraries provide critical service to the disadvantaged and all Virginians every day. For FY2024 the Board encourages the City of Falls Church to seek a \$2.5 million increase to state aid for public libraries as a step towards full funding.

Virginians visit their public libraries every day, relying on their library to bridge the digital divide, assist their job search, and support early childhood literacy and education initiatives. And there is more that they would do if they had the additional resources called for in the Code of Virginia for supporting State Aid for Public Libraries. Based on local needs, public libraries will be able to improve and expand access to these services to improve the community.

State Aid to Public Libraries has been deeply cut in the past, declining by over \$5 million in constant dollars to a level last seen in FY 1999. This happened despite the 2001 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study that found the State Aid program to be an effective investment that leverages local spending and achieves cost efficiencies and economies of scale. In recent years we have seen modest increases to State Aid including an additional \$2.5 million in FY2023.

Background:

The State Aid funding formula rewards local effort in the provision of public library service. **In Falls Church, 100% of State Aid monies are used for the purchase of books, magazines, DVDs, audio-books, e-book/e-audiobooks for the public.**

To show the recent history in State Aid funding for the library:

- In FY2020, the library received \$153,156 (an increase of \$7,131 from last year due to the increase from the General Assembly). This is still only 60% of full funding.
- In FY2021 the library received \$167,580.
- In FY2022 the library was awarded \$166,792. A slight decrease due to a decrease in local expenditures from 2019 to 2020 (affected by COVID). This is approximately 66% of full funding.

- FY2023 was awarded \$188,826 due to the increase in State Aid overall of \$2.5 million. This brings funding to approximately 74% of full funding.
- FY2024 state aid estimate is \$189,725

2. Legislative and Budget Support for the Library of Virginia

The Board of Trustees supports the Library of Virginia’s legislative and budgetary priorities and proposes that the General Assembly continue the work begun in fiscal year 2013 to strengthen the financial foundation for Virginia’s only public research library.

3. Change to City of Falls Church Charter

The Board supports amending section 4.14 “Appointments” of the Charter of the City of Falls Church to replace qualified voter status criteria with age of at least 18 years old and keep the requirement for residing within the city limits. This would support the core value of inclusiveness and social sustainability and provide diversity of perspective to Boards and Commissions.

The Board would also support the change in language of the Library Board of Trustees Chapter 24 of the City Code Sec. 24-3 from “among the eligible voters” to “shall be at least eighteen (18) years of age and reside within the city limits”.

Strategies

Because of the continued need for State Aid to public libraries in Virginia, it is necessary to make legislators aware of the Board’s concerns. Therefore, the following strategies are suggested:

- Library Board members and City/County governing bodies should attend the State budget hearings that are held throughout the state and advocate that funding be restored to State Aid as soon as economically feasible.
- Library Board members and the Library Director should meet with their legislators to make them aware of the needs of their local libraries and their stances on the issues noted above.
- The Library Board of Trustees encourages patrons to write their legislators stressing the needs of the Mary Riley Styles Public Library and promoting the positions listed above.

This 2023 Legislative Agenda was adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on 11/16/2022.