Dear Member of the Maryland Library Association;

On October 10, 2019, the Maryland Library Association Executive Board passed the following resolution in response to Macmillan’s proposed changes for how they will and will not sell eBooks to libraries. This policy would significantly limit access to eBooks for communities across the country. By limiting the purchase of eBooks for libraries to one copy for the first 8 weeks, Macmillian demonstrates that its corporate priorities are not to cultivate readers and promote reading, but to take any actions they deem necessary to promote their bottom line. This shortsighted strategy is driven by the unsubstantiated belief “that library lending was cannibalizing sales”, as stated by Macmillan CEO John Sargent.

Should this new practice be instituted, it would allow one copy to be purchased for the entire Maryland Digital eLibrary Consortium. A recently proposed amendment to this would allow each county to purchase only one additional copy during the first 8 weeks following a title’s release. This would still keep each county library from being able to come close to meeting the needs of their community. Print copies would not be subjected to this limitation.

The Executive Board of the Maryland Library Association believe that this choice by Macmillan Publishers directly affects the library’s ability to provide equal access to all Maryland citizens. Additional information and updates on this situation can be found on the ALA website - ebooksforall.org and http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2019/09/ala-launches-national-campaign-against-e-book-embargo. MLA encourages libraries, library staff and private citizens to express their opposition to this and any similar restrictive policies by using ALA’s #ebooksforall campaign and other advocacy channels.

Sincerely,

Andrea Berstler

President, Maryland Library Association
A Resolution on Ebook Sales Restrictions
Maryland Library Association

WHEREAS, Maryland’s public libraries currently serve more than 3,600,000 cardholders; and
WHEREAS, the continued commitment to a high quality of services and ease of access places Maryland as a leader for libraries nationwide; and
WHEREAS, millions of Marylanders, including students, now use digital content as their preferred or only access to books, music, and movies; and
WHEREAS, information and content must be accessible to all people, in all available formats, regardless of their personal income or physical ability or reading ability; and
WHEREAS, Marylanders downloaded more than 3,690,000 eBooks and eAudiobooks in 2018 from public libraries across the state; and
WHEREAS, the U.S. publishing industry earned $25.83 billion in revenue in 2018, with downloaded audio experiencing 28.7% growth over 2017; and
WHEREAS, major publisher Macmillian, has recently announced their intention to implement restrictive purchasing policies for eBooks that directly and severely impact the ability of Maryland’s public libraries to provide equality of access to materials and information by requiring all public libraries to share a single digital copy among 6 million citizens.
WHEREAS, Macmillian CEO John Sargent accuses libraries of “cannibalizing” sales and actively “marketing... to turn purchasers into borrowers.”
WHEREAS, taxpayer supported public libraries spent millions of dollars in 2018 on eBooks and eAudiobooks; and
WHEREAS, these new policies place a significant and undue burden on both institutions and individuals, while further broadening the digital divide between those who can and those who cannot afford digital access.
WHEREAS, these arbitrary limitations make it impossible for libraries to fulfill their central mission of ensuring equal access to information for all, regardless of socioeconomic status; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED on this day October 10, 2019, that we, the members of the Maryland Library Association, call upon publishers, specifically Macmillan, to reconsider the announced restrictive and onerous policies and engage in a meaningful and direct dialogue with libraries, library consortia, library associations, authors, and other relevant stakeholders for the purpose of creating new policies that ensure equitable access to all of Maryland's citizens.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we support the American Library Association’s position of opposition of any sales model or policy that imposes arbitrary limitations that undermine libraries’ abilities to serve their communities.