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The Maryland Library Association [MLA] is thrilled to announce its selection as one of the ten pilot sites for the American Library Association's [ALA] new Intellectual Freedom Helpline program. This prestigious grant, awarded by ALA through the generous support of the Acton Family Giving and critical program support from the Mellon Foundation, will provide MLA with \$10,000 to develop and operate a confidential reporting system that addresses censorship attempts and supports intellectual freedom.

MLA will use the grant to establish an Intellectual Freedom Helpline to offer a confidential and reliable resource for individuals facing censorship challenges. The helpline will connect those in need with professional support, in-state peers, and referral to ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom [OIF] as necessary. This initiative is designed to build a robust network for people who work in libraries, helping them to navigate and counteract censorship attempts effectively.

The grant also supports the ALA in collecting valuable data on censorship incidents to integrate into the ALA's national database. This data collection will help document the scope of censorship attempts and also contribute to the development of resources, best practices, and the enhancement of both providing and receiving support in the realm of intellectual freedom.

"We are incredibly grateful for this opportunity from ALA, Acton Family Giving, and the Mellon Foundation," said MLA's grant project lead, Tif Sutherland. "The Intellectual Freedom Helpline will empower us to better support our community in safeguarding First Amendment rights. Ensuring that every individual's access to information remains protected and that organizations uphold Maryland's newly passed Freedom to Read Act. We look forward to working closely with ALA and other pilot sites to make this program successful."

MLA President Teonja Jung adds: "Establishing this helpline will serve as a valuable resource for librarians and library workers throughout the state, reinforcing our commitment to intellectual freedom, which is the bedrock of our work."

The grant is part of ALA's broader initiative to strengthen the framework for defending intellectual freedom nationwide. By partnering with state and school library associations, ALA aims to establish effective helplines that serve as critical resources for those facing censorship.

For more information about the Maryland Library Association's new Intellectual Freedom Helpline and its ongoing commitment to intellectual freedom, please visit [mdlib.org](http://mdlib.org) or contact Tif Sutherland, the grant's project lead, at [mia@mdlib.org](mailto:mia@mdlib.org).

