December 21, 2012

Sen. Joseph B. Scarnati III
Senate Box 203025
Room: 292, Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3025

RE: Support for Introduction of a Bill to Enact the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act

Dear Senator Scarnati:

We write on behalf of the Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association (WPLLA) and the Greater Philadelphia Law Library Association (GPLLA) in support of introduction of a bill to enact the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act (UELMA), which will provide Pennsylvania with a technology-neutral, outcomes-based approach to ensure that online state legal material deemed official will be preserved and made permanently available to the public in unaltered form.

Together, WPLLA and GPLLA represent over 325 law librarians at law firms, law schools, and state, court and county law libraries in Pennsylvania. WPLLA and GPLLA, founded in 1978 and 1970, respectively, are chapters of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), a nonprofit educational organization with more than 5000 members nationwide. AALL members serve the needs of the legal community and the public at more than 1900 academic, firm, state, court and county law libraries.

UELMA addresses the urgent problem, identified in AALL’s 2007 State-by-State Report on Authentication of Online Legal Resources, that more and more states are eliminating their print legal resources in favor of online-only, without assuring trustworthiness and reliability. This bill will ensure that online legal material is guaranteed the same level of authority traditionally provided by print publication. Importantly, UELMA covers a range of key materials including the state constitution, state session laws, codified laws, judicial opinions, and agency regulations. This bill will ensure that anyone--whether a citizen, judge, legislator, attorney or researcher--will be able to verify the state legal material available to them online.

UELMA is supported by the Uniform Law Commission (ULC), the American Association of Law Libraries, and the American Bar Association. Many other stakeholders--including the U.S. Government Printing Office, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Society of American Archivists, the National Center for State Courts, and the Association of Reporters of Judicial Decisions--were observers to the ULC drafting committee.

We strongly urge the introduction of a bill adopting UELMA. Pennsylvania will establish itself as a leader among states that have recognized that official, electronic legal material must be authenticated, preserved and made permanently available to the public. Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Karen Shephard                                                                                     Mary Elizabeth Newsom
President                                                                                         President
Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association                                                        Greater Philadelphia Law Library Association