Chairman Hammen, Vice Chair Pendergrass, and members of the committee:

I am Steve Anderson, the Immediate Past President of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). On behalf of AALL, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 162, the Maryland Uniform Electronic Legal Materials Act (UELMA). AALL strongly urges the Committee to approve HB 162. UELMA will ensure that Maryland’s online legal materials deemed official will be authenticated, preserved and made permanently available to the public, thereby guaranteeing the same level of trustworthiness that print provides today.

AALL is a nonprofit educational organization which represents approximately 5,000 law librarians who serve the information needs of the legal community and the public at academic, firm, state, court and county law libraries. AALL’s mission is to promote and enhance the value of law libraries, to foster law librarianship and to provide leadership and advocacy in the field of legal information and information policy.

UELMA addresses the urgent problem, first identified in AALL’s 2007 State-by-State Report on Authentication of Online Legal Resources, that many state governments are eliminating their print legal resources in favor of online-only, without assuring trustworthiness and reliability. Law libraries pride themselves on their ability to provide accurate and authentic legal information to their customers. Years ago, one could assume that a requested primary legal resource in book format was exactly what it purported to be—the container of the law itself. The digital world, in spite of its ubiquity and accessibility, stands that traditional notion on its head. How do we really know that a posted online text has not been altered? And a hundred years from now, how will we know what the law was in 2015? As we move into the reality of digital publishing, these are the questions that law librarians, the stewards of legal information, must have answered.

Fortunately, UELMA provides an outcomes-based and technology-neutral approach to ensuring that Maryland’s online legal materials are guaranteed the same level of trustworthiness traditionally provided by print publication. This flexibility allows the state to determine which technologies best meet Maryland’s needs and budget. Reports by the California Office of Legislative Counsel and the Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes provide details on technological options, such as digital signatures and hash values, which meet the act’s requirements. UELMA has already been adopted by twelve states, including Pennsylvania and Delaware.

AALL strongly urges you to support HB 162. Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee might have.