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

I am Emily Feltren, Director of Government Relations for 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 46, the Maryland Uniform Electronic Legal Materials Act (UELMA). AALL strongly urges the Committee to approve HB 46 as amended. 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 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. AALL recently conducted a groundbreaking national inventory of legal materials, which includes information about legal resources at all levels of government. More than 350 law librarians, including many Maryland law librarians, answered questions related to authentication, preservation and permanent public access of state, county and municipal information.

AALL’s Government Relations Office and Digital Access to Legal Information Committee analyzed the data gathered in the inventory, which includes thousands of legal titles. This analysis confirmed what we already suspected: most states have not yet taken steps to authenticate or preserve their official online legal materials.

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.

AALL strongly urges you to support HB 46, as amended. Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter.