



Media Release • For Immediate Release

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Howard County Library System Announces New President & CEO

(Ellicott City, MD) – Howard County Library System’s Board of Trustees is pleased to announce Tonya Kennon as HCLS’ next President & CEO. Kennon joins HCLS following a career in libraries in California. She begins her new role April 23. Kennon succeeds Valerie J. Gross, who retired in August after 16 years with HCLS.

Kennon is currently the director of Riverside Public Library, where she has led the system since 2011. A municipal library system, Riverside comprises a main library and seven branches serving a city of 314,000 people. As director, she worked to secure unanimous City Council approval to construct a new \$40M main library (breaking ground this year), convinced 85 percent of voters to approve a library parcel tax measure, secured a 20 percent increase in grant revenue, implemented 100 percent privately funded STEM Makerspaces at all library locations, and hosted the 2017 California Library Association conference. Prior to her director position, Kennon served as the County Librarian and Library Services Supervisor with the County of Riverside and Tustin Unified School District. She received her B.A. from California Baptist University and M.L.I.S. from San Jose State University.

“We are thrilled to welcome Tonya (pronounced tone-ya) to Howard County Library System,” said Louise Riemer, HCLS Board of Trustees Chair. “Her vision, passion, and commitment to education will build on our reputation for excellence. We look forward to working with her and continuing HCLS’ success.”

“I am honored and excited to join the prestigious Howard County Library System as the next President & CEO,” noted Kennon. “I was attracted by the organization’s mission and vision built on the Libraries = Education philosophy. Enhancing lives through quality education and leveraging citizens’ knowledge and skill sets are the best multipliers for developing 21st century thinkers and sustaining strong communities. I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees, the HCLS team, and the community toward an even stronger Howard County.”

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The HCLS Board of Trustees worked with Bradbury Miller Associates, an executive search firm specializing in libraries, to select Kennon.

BACKGROUND

- A vital component of Howard County's renowned education system, Howard County Library System delivers high-quality public education for all.
- Ranked among the nation's great public library systems, HCLS was named Library of the Year Award by Gale/Library Journal in 2013. HCLS was selected from among the 21,000 public and academic libraries in North America.
- Students of all ages, means, and backgrounds visited HCLS' six branches nearly 2 million times in FY17 to borrow 8 million items and conduct research. Attendance at HCLS' classes and events totaled 340,000 (a 10 percent increase over the previous year) and research assistance interactions reached 2 million. A recognized leader in the state and nation for excellence in education for all, HCLS' per capita borrowing stands in the top 10 nationally and continues to lead all other systems in the State of Maryland.

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