



WHEATON WOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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February 10, 2022

Dear Delegate Korman:

My name is Dr. Daman Harris, and I am the principal of Wheaton Woods Elementary School in Rockville. I am writing to express my support for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Each month for the past 2 years, the Library has provided books to more than 100 pre-school-aged children in my community. Our student body is approximately 82% eligible to receive free or reduced meals, 55% English Learners, and 40% proficient in English Language Arts. Supplemental reading supports are essential for the growth of our students, so we allocate a substantial amount of funding, staffing, and time to providing interventions and extracurricular activities to our students from the moment they arrive. The Imagination Library allows us to provide years of support before students even enroll! We can proactively confront issues of opportunity and language proficiency in ways that view our parents as partners, rather than problems. We consider ourselves very fortunate to be able to partner with the Imagination Library, and we wish that more school communities had the chance.

As far as the direct impact on my students, the program has not been implemented here for long enough to affect change on student achievement data. However, anecdotal reports from parents indicate that the Library is making a significant difference in the lives of our future students and their families. For example, one mother walked up to me during student dismissal to share her excitement about the program. She explained that her three-year-old daughter looks forward to receiving her book each month because it makes her feel like a big-kid. Another mother told me that the book readings have become a family tradition during which everyone gathers around for the stories. One of our Spanish-speaking community members told me about how pleased she was that some books are in Spanish, which helped her promote bilingual literacy for every young person in her home. In August 2025, some of my kindergarten students will walk through our doors knowing that they have home libraries of almost 60 books, and they will have read every one of them!

The final topic that I'll raise is cost. I understand that the Imagination Library costs a little more than \$25 per year for each child. Many families in our community cannot afford to spend their discretionary income on a reading program. That's why we are grateful to the Montgomery County

division of the Imagination Library and the Children's Opportunity Fund. Both organizations have found ways to provide the program at no cost to our families. Other principals have asked me about the program, but they might not have partners like ours. We wish that every family in Maryland had this option.

The Imagination Library is a simple way to demonstrate caring and promote literacy. And we all know that students who achieve reading standards in elementary school will have positive effects on future employment, housing, healthcare, and law enforcement issues in the communities we share.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Harris".

Daman Harris, Ph.D.

Principal

Wheaton Woods Elementary School