



**Testimony on Behalf of HB 383 - Young Readers Program Expansion Act
Maryland House of Delegates, Ways and Means Committee
February 10, 2022**

Thank you Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, members of this committee and Delegate Korman.

I'm Susan Greif, president of Imagination Library of Montgomery County.

Our affiliate is 7 years old, has served over 2,000 children and distributed over 40,000 books. in 7 county zip codes.

Several years ago, a mother sent us a note of thanks. She said she didn't have much to give, but wanted to contribute. \$2 was included.

Her sentiments have stuck with us, because there are undoubtedly many stories like hers.....
...too many households that have few or no books.

The situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Many children < 5 with no vaccine... have limited access to libraries and other places where they would be exposed to books.

And even in the best of times, many parents lack the time, financial resources or transportation to provide this access.

We know this leads to deficits in social, emotional and academic development, early literacy and kindergarten readiness. These challenges are NOT going away anytime soon.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library books have continued to arrive... one book every month...that is age-appropriate and comes to the child's mailbox in their name.

In Montgomery County, we have enrolled about 2% of eligible children. But we want include so many more. And we need your help, by providing access to additional funds through a matching grant program.

I'll bet you can vividly remember your favorite children's book and the time you spent reading with your family.

THIS is the power of reading, and Dolly Parton tells us - Dream More, Learn More, Care More and Be More.

We also urge a favorable report.

Susan Greif