



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Young Readers Program Expansion Act (HB 383) Fact Sheet

The Young Readers Program Expansion Act would increase the support for the eighteen existing and any future Imagination Libraries throughout Maryland. The Imagination Library aims to provide free books to children under the age of 5. It is a non-profit established by Dolly Parton in 1995 and since then has provided 172 million books to children under the age of 5. The Young Reader's Program Expansion Act provides \$500,000 from which affiliated Imagination Libraries in Maryland can apply for matching funds to support their work providing free books to children. The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services has supported the Baltimore City's Young Readers Program since 2016, however that support has not been codified. The Young Readers Program Expansion Act would lock in the existing Baltimore City program and expand the state's support to more communities in Maryland through a matching grant program.

Studies show that 65% of fourth graders are not at a proficient reading level.¹ If not helped, those children are four times more likely to not graduate High School. Luckily, data shows that we can combat this by introducing reading at a young age. The Imagination Library is a fantastic way to introduce reading while also providing families with an additional source of bonding.

Benefits of Early Childhood Literacy²

- Higher reading exposure was 95% positively correlated with a growing region supporting semantic language processing in the brain.
- According to the Department of Education, the more students read or are read to for fun on their own time and at home, the higher their reading scores, generally.
- The number of books in the home correlates significantly with higher reading scores for children.

¹ "30 Key Child Literacy Stats Parents Need to Be Aware Of," Literacy Project Foundation, February 14, 2019, <https://literacyproj.org/2019/02/14/30-key-child-literacy-stats-parents-need-to-be-aware-of/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20books%20in,higher%20reading%20scores%20for%20children.&text=Childr en%20who%20are%20read%20to,than%203%20time>

² Ibid

- Students who choose what they read and have an informal environment in which to read tend to be more motivated, read more and show greater language and literacy development.
- Children who are read to at least three times a week by a family member are almost twice as likely to score in the top 25% in reading compared to children who are read to less than 3 times a week.
- A child is 90% likely to remain a poor reader at the end of the fourth grade if the child is a poor reader at the end of first grade.
- 90% of brain growth happens by the age of 5. Children that are reached with a high quality education by the age of 5 are 40% less likely to be held back a grade, and 70% more likely to graduate high school.
- Reading daily to young children, starting in infancy, can help with language acquisition, communication skills, social skills, and literacy skills.
- Children in low-income families lack essential one-on-one reading time, whereas on average, children who grow up in middle-class families have been exposed to 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading. The average child growing up in a low-income family, in contrast, has only been exposed to 25 hours of one-on-one reading.
- A study of 3- to 5-year-olds who had been read to at least three times per week found the children:
 - Two times more likely to recognize all letters.
 - Two times more likely to have word-sight recognition.
 - Two times more likely to understand words in context.

Measurable Impacts for Children Enrolled in Imagination Libraries

- 90 percent of a child's brain is developed by the age of 5, and is a critical development window.
- Reading 3 times a week jumped from 60 percent to 85 percent.
- Daily reading jumped from 20 to 59 percent.
- 29 percent increase in children ready for Kindergarten.
- Significantly stronger reading skills and higher scores on reading achievement tests over their non-participating peers.

Statistics for Maryland

- 9 percent of children aged 0-5 in Maryland are enrolled.
- 33,917 Number of Maryland students enrolled
- 364,488 number of children in Maryland that are eligible in Maryland
- 18 number of program sites in state
- \$2.10 is the cost of the program per child per month

The below chart shows a breakdown of existing Imagination Library affiliates throughout Maryland and the number of children they serve.³

Community Served	Affiliate Name	Non-Profit Partner	Number of Children Served
Allegany County	County United Way	County United Way	1,912
Caroline County	Caroline County Public Library	Caroline County Public Library	1049
Kent County	Kent County Judy Center	Mid-Shore Community Foundation	455
Lower Eastern Shore: Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester County	United Way of Lower Eastern Shore (salisbury)	United Way of Lower Eastern Shore	4,528
Prince George's County	Prince George's Memorial Library System	Prince George's Memorial Library System	13,256
Queens Anne's County	Queen Anne's County Library	Queen Anne's County Library	796
Talbot County	Imagination Library of Talbot	Mid-Shore Community Foundation	1,193
Tyler Heights Elementary School Catchment Area	Annapolis Area Imagination Library	Tyler Heights Elementary	508
Baltimore City	Banneker-Douglass Museum	Banneker-Douglass Museum	6,376
University of Maryland Baltimore County	Chapter 22-UM-UMBC, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi	Chapter 22-UM-UMBC, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi	19
Frederick Elementary School: Butterfly	Frederick County Public Schools	Frederick County Public Schools	408

³ Dolly, Team. "USA :: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: Find My Program" Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, <https://imaginationlibrary.com/usa/find-my-program/>

Ridge, Hillcrest, Lincoln, Monocacy, North Frederick, Orchard Grove, and Waverly			
Cecil County	Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Cecil County MD	CASA of Cecil County	692
Garret County	Garrett Reading Council	Garrett Reading Council & Landon's Library	579
Easterseals	Easter Seals Little Warriors Bath Chai	Bath Chai	1
Montgomery County	Imagination Library of Montgomery County	Imagination Library of Montgomery County	1,016
Wheaton Wood ES Catchment Area	Imagination Library of Wheaton Woods Elementary School PTA	Wheaton Woods Elementary School PTA	118
Charles County	Charles County Public Library	Charles County Public Library	1049

The Dolly Parton Shared Funding Model

- The Dollywood Foundation covers overhead/administrative costs associated with making the program available in local communities.
- Local community partners are responsible for reduced book and mailing expenses for children registered in their coverage area.
- State provides 50%-dollar match developed in coordination with state leaders, public funds, federal grants, and private funds.

National Support of Imagination Library

States that fund 50 percent (\$1.05) of the program cost per child:

- Tennessee
- Arkansas
- Colorado

- Ohio
- West Virginia
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Orlando
- Oklahoma

States that fund 100 percent (\$2.10) of the program cost per child:

- Washington D.C.
- North Carolina
- Delaware