



Southern Maryland Regional Library Association, Inc.

Advancing Library Excellence

January 17, 2024

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of **SB0163 – Charles County Public Library – Imagination Library Program – Funding**. Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) is a book gifting program that mail free, high quality books to children from birth to five, no matter their family’s income. Charles County Public Library (CCPL) launched this successful program in October 2021. As of December 2023, there have been 3,678 children registered in the program who have received 47,444 books.

According to research findings on imaginationlibrary.com, benefits of DPIL for participants include: positive perceptions of the program itself; the development of richer home literacy environments; and improving children’s attitudes about reading and their reading skills. Additionally, a [popular study from 2018](#) has revealed that proximity to books enhances children’s learning.

With the success of this program has come an increase in costs. From July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, CCPL invested \$19,104.85 to support DPIL. From July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, the cost went up to \$47,891.44. From July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023, the cost was \$33,104.69 and the estimated total cost for FY 2024 is \$68,500. These costs are separate from what the library spends on the circulating collection to support children.

With Senator Ellis’ support, and in keeping with the statewide emphasis on early childhood education as a priority, funding the Charles County Public Library’s Imagination Library Program is a great opportunity to ensure Charles County’s children are prepared to be successful in school. Executive Director Kenneth Wayne Thompson has already demonstrated that this program is achievable and it has generated interest among his peers in Southern Maryland and across the state.

I hope this committee not only funds the Charles County Imagination Library program but also considers the impact that the funding levels listed above could have on all public libraries in Maryland as a statewide initiative.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ashley Teagle
CEO