

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2025 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 415 (Delegates Palakovich Carr and Amprey)  
 Ways and Means

**State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment**

This bill establishes the Family Literacy Pilot Program, administered by the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA), to foster family literacy and strengthen parent-child relationships by providing children’s books in State correctional facilities to incarcerated individuals and a means for an incarcerated individual to read aloud to the individual’s child. MSLA, in consultation with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and the Correctional Education Council within the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor), must select four State correctional facility libraries or prerelease centers to participate in the program, as specified. The bill authorizes MSLA to adopt regulations necessary to carry out the bill’s requirements. MSLA must report on the results of the program by December 1, 2028. **The bill terminates December 31, 2028.**

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$69,200 in FY 2026. Future years reflect annualization and ongoing costs and reflect termination of the pilot program in FY 2029. Revenues are not affected.

| (in dollars)   | FY 2026    | FY 2027    | FY 2028    | FY 2029    | FY 2030 |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------|
| Revenues       | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0     |
| GF Expenditure | 69,200     | 70,800     | 73,800     | 38,500     | 0       |
| Net Effect     | (\$69,200) | (\$70,800) | (\$73,800) | (\$38,500) | \$0     |

*Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The four State correctional facility libraries or prerelease centers selected to participate in the program must (1) represent each of the western, central, and eastern regions of the State; (2) consist of at least one correctional facility serving female incarcerated individuals; and (3) consist of at least one correctional facility serving male incarcerated individuals.

MSLA must select the children's books for use in the program, including children's books in languages other than English. MSLA, in consultation with DPSCS and the Correctional Education Council, must:

- establish a process to secure written permission to participate in the program from the custodial parent or guardian of an incarcerated individual's child;
- establish a process to assist an incarcerated individual in selecting an age-appropriate children's book, preparing a recording of the incarcerated individual reading the book aloud, and distributing a copy of the book and the recording to the incarcerated individual's child; and
- ensure participation in the program is free of charge for the incarcerated individual, the child, and the custodial parent or guardian.

### **Current Law:**

#### *Correctional Education Council*

The Correctional Education Council is under the joint jurisdiction of MD Labor and DPSCS. The council must develop and recommend an educational and workforce training program for adult correctional institutions in the State. These programs must meet the special needs and circumstances of the inmates in each correctional institution.

#### *Workforce Development and Adult Learning*

MD Labor's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) oversees Correctional Education throughout Maryland's State correctional facilities. DWDAL's Office of Correctional Education provides career training opportunities "behind the fence." Offerings vary by institution but include training in automotive skills, barbering, construction, and welding. All occupational courses lead to a portable, industry-recognized credential that contributes to an inmate's employability after release. In addition to occupational programming, the Office of Correctional Education oversees academic and transitional courses throughout Maryland's prisons. Academic programming includes GED preparation ahead of earning a Maryland high school diploma and English as a

second language courses. Prior to release, inmates may complete transitional courses to ease their reentrance to society. These offerings include classes in parenting, employment readiness, financial literacy, and life skills.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures increase by \$69,207 in fiscal 2026, which accounts for the bill’s October 1, 2025 effective date.

DPSCS has determined that four regular full-time positions are needed to implement the bill (*i.e.*, one administrator at each of the four facilities participating in the program). However, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) advises that the added responsibilities incurred by this legislation are not permanent and, thus, may be performed by a contractual employee instead. Furthermore, DLS advises that the pilot program can likely be implemented with one contractual administrator, as the bill does not explicitly require the pilot program to be conducted simultaneously at each of the four facilities.

This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one contractual program administrator within DPSCS to assist with the administration of the program within DPSCS facilities. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. In addition, the estimate includes supplies and equipment for MSLA (*e.g.*, books, recording equipment, and other miscellaneous administrative expenses) to conduct the required activities.

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Contractual Position                         | 1.0             |
| Salary and Fringe Benefits                   | \$54,588        |
| MSLA Supplies, Equipment, and Communications | 7,250           |
| Operating Expenses                           | <u>7,369</u>    |
| <b>Total FY 2026 State Expenditures</b>      | <b>\$69,207</b> |

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses. This estimate assumes the contractual position terminates December 31, 2028, (consistent with the bill’s termination date and about four weeks after the submission of the report by MSLA).

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State’s implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

The Correctional Education Council within MD Labor can consult with MSLA and DPSCS using existing resources.

## **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 378 (Senator A. Washington) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Library Agency; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 3, 2025  
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