

HOUSE BILL 1277

F2, F5

6lr3345
CF 6lr3657

By: **Delegate Smith**

Introduced and read first time: February 12, 2026

Assigned to: Appropriations and Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Education – Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity – Establishment**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity organized
4 as a partnership between the University of Maryland, College Park Campus and
5 Morgan State University to serve as a State-funded research and technical
6 assistance center to promote literacy in the State; requiring the Governor to include
7 in the annual budget bill certain appropriations to the University of Maryland,
8 College Park Campus, Morgan State University, and the Institute; and generally
9 relating to the Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity.

10 BY adding to

11 Article – Education

12 Section 24–1401 through 24–1405 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 14.

13 Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity”

14 Annotated Code of Maryland

15 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

16 Preamble

17 WHEREAS, Maryland’s fourth grade reading scores have declined sharply over the
18 last decade and, as of 2024, the State is ranked 20 out of 50 U.S. states based on the
19 National Assessment of Educational Progress survey in reading; and

20 WHEREAS, Disparities in reading outcomes on the basis of race, ethnicity,
21 socioeconomic status, and language spoken at home contribute to broader social and
22 economic inequalities; and

23 WHEREAS, Literacy achievement is a primary civil rights concern, essential to
24 addressing unemployment, incarceration rates, poverty, and health outcomes; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, Unlike neighboring states, Maryland lacks a dedicated
2 university-based center to provide research and technical assistance on effective literacy
3 practices; and

4 WHEREAS, The Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity would bring together
5 two of Maryland's flagship universities – Morgan State University, the State's preeminent
6 public urban research university, and the University of Maryland, the State's land-grant
7 university and strategic partner – thus situating the Maryland Institute for Literacy and
8 Equity as a uniquely qualified resource to serve the State's diverse populations; now,
9 therefore,

10 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
11 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

12 **Article – Education**

13 **SUBTITLE 14. MARYLAND INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY AND EQUITY.**

14 **24-1401.**

15 (A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
16 INDICATED.

17 (B) “INSTITUTE” MEANS THE MARYLAND INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY AND
18 EQUITY.

19 (C) “UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN §
20 12-101 OF THIS ARTICLE.

21 **24-1402.**

22 (A) THERE IS A MARYLAND INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY AND EQUITY
23 ORGANIZED AS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND,
24 COLLEGE PARK CAMPUS AND MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY TO SERVE AS A
25 STATE-FUNDED RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER TO PROMOTE
26 LITERACY IN THE STATE.

27 (B) THE INSTITUTE SHALL:

28 (1) SUPPORT THE MISSION AND PRIORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT
29 AND COUNTY BOARDS BY PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND BY
30 COORDINATING ACCESS TO PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES NEEDED BY THESE
31 ENTITIES AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE TO ENHANCE AND EXPAND THE
32 IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTION;

1 **(2) CONDUCT CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE AND**
2 **LITERACY TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE, EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN LITERACY**
3 **THAT INCREASE LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL CHILDREN**
4 **AND ADULTS IN THE STATE;**

5 **(3) PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE**
6 **AND GRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE RESPECTIVE PARTNER INSTITUTIONS ON**
7 **EVIDENCE-BASED LITERACY PRACTICES THAT ARE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF**
8 **A DIVERSE POPULATION; AND**

9 **(4) ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND**
10 **OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS, INCLUDING LIBRARIES AND**
11 **AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS, TO PROVIDE AWARENESS AROUND EVIDENCE-BASED**
12 **LITERACY PRACTICES THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE STUDENTS SERVED.**

13 **24-1403.**

14 **(A) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2028, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE**
15 **ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$1,500,000 TO THE UNIVERSITY OF**
16 **MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK CAMPUS AND \$1,500,000 TO MORGAN STATE**
17 **UNIVERSITY TO ESTABLISH THE INSTITUTE.**

18 **(B) (1) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2029, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE**
19 **ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$4,000,000 TO THE INSTITUTE.**

20 **(2) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2030, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE**
21 **ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$5,000,000 TO THE INSTITUTE.**

22 **(3) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2031 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER,**
23 **THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION**
24 **OF \$6,000,000 TO THE INSTITUTE.**

25 **(C) THE APPROPRIATIONS TO THE INSTITUTE UNDER SUBSECTIONS (A)**
26 **AND (B) OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE USED TO:**

27 **(1) EXPAND CAPACITY TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE**
28 **DEPARTMENT AND COUNTY BOARDS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE ON THE**
29 **IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTION;**

30 **(2) ENHANCE RESEARCH CAPACITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH**
31 **SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES TO FURTHER DEVELOP INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN**
32 **LITERACY THAT INCREASE LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL**
33 **CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN THE STATE;**

1 **(3) PROVIDE PROGRAMS, TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, AND**
2 **RESOURCES FOR THE STATE’S LITERACY PROFESSIONALS ON THE BEST**
3 **EVIDENCE–BASED LITERACY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT LEARNERS FROM ALL**
4 **CULTURES, COMMUNITIES, LANGUAGES, AND OF ALL ABILITIES, INCLUDING TO:**

5 **(I) EDUCATORS;**

6 **(II) ADMINISTRATORS;**

7 **(III) LIBRARIANS AND MEDIA SPECIALISTS;**

8 **(IV) SPEECH–LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS; AND**

9 **(V) SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS;**

10 **(4) FACILITATE PARTNERSHIPS AMONG EDUCATORS, RESEARCHERS,**
11 **COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND POLICYMAKERS TO FOSTER GREATER KNOWLEDGE AND**
12 **UNDERSTANDING OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES AROUND LITERACY;**

13 **(5) ASSIST THE DEPARTMENT, COUNTY BOARDS, AND SCHOOL**
14 **LEADERS TO ANALYZE AND INTERPRET DATA TO:**

15 **(I) INFORM DECISION MAKING;**

16 **(II) DEVELOP ACTION PLANS; AND**

17 **(III) IMPROVE LITERACY OUTCOMES;**

18 **(6) PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THE IMPACT OF POLICIES IN THE**
19 **PROMOTION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF LITERACY INCLUDING THROUGH WORK WITH**
20 **LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS; AND**

21 **(7) PROMOTE LITERACY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT WITH THE**
22 **BROADER COMMUNITY IN THE STATE INCLUDING THROUGH OUTREACH PROGRAMS,**
23 **FAMILY LITERACY INITIATIVES, AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.**

24 **24–1404.**

25 **ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2027, AND EACH OCTOBER 1 THEREAFTER, THE**
26 **INSTITUTE SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT DETAILING THE INSTITUTE’S ACTIVITIES,**
27 **OUTCOMES, AND FINANCIAL EXPENDITURES FOR THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING**
28 **FISCAL YEAR TO THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND AND THE DEPARTMENT.**

1 24-1405.

2 THIS SUBTITLE MAY BE CITED AS THE MARYLAND INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY
3 AND EQUITY ACT.

4 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
5 1, 2026.