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January 21, 2022

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Pinsky, Senator Kagan, and Honored Committee Members:

I am writing in support of SB 108: Charles County Public Library - Imagination Library Program – Funding. As the Director of the Queen Anne’s County Library I have first-hand knowledge of the impact participation in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library has on a child’s ability to enter school ready to learn. In 2018 we were fortunate to partner with our local Judy Center to provide access to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library for our under 5 population. The impact was significant. In the 2017/2018 school year, 48% of Queen Anne’s County children entered kindergarten ready to learn. Just one year later, after implementing the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program, 57% of Queen Anne’s County children entered kindergarten ready to learn, an increase of 18.75%. Studies show that the single most important activity parents can do to get their children ready to read and learn is to read out loud them. The number of words a child knows upon entering school is a key indicator of future school success. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library puts the books into the hands of parents so they can model reading as a behavior and increase their children’s vocabulary.

The cost of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library can be a detriment to a library’s ability to participate in the program. For every child enrolled in the program, the cost is \$25 per year until the child ages out at 5 years old. Committing to the program means making hard decisions about other services that may not have resources to continue. The funding in this bill will be crucial to the Charles County Public Library’s ability to provide this program.

I ask the committee to support SB 108 and to also consider expanding the bill so that all Maryland Public Libraries will have this funding available to support participation in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library statewide.

Sincerely,

Janet Salazar
Director

Queen Anne’s County Library