



**Testimony on Behalf of SB 483 - Young Readers Program Expansion Act
Senate Education, Health and Environment Affairs Committee
February 16, 2022**

Thank you Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair and members of the committee for this chance to speak in favor of the bill.

I'm Susan Greif, president of Imagination Library of Montgomery County.

Our affiliate is 7 years old, has served over 2,200 children and distributed over 40,000 books. in 7 county zip codes.

Several years ago, a mother sent us a note of thanks. She said she didn't have much to give, but wanted to contribute. \$2 was included.

Her sentiments stuck with us, because there are undoubtedly many stories like hers.....
...too many households that have few or no books.

The situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Many children < 5 with no vaccine have limited access to libraries and other places with books.

And even in the best of times, many parents lack the time, money or transportation to provide this access.

We know this leads to deficits in social, emotional and academic development, early literacy and kindergarten readiness. These challenges are NOT going away.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library books have continued to arrive... one book every month...that is age-appropriate and comes to the child's mailbox in their name. Just \$2.10/month.

In Montgomery County, we have enrolled about 2% of eligible children. But we want include so many more. And we need your help, by providing access to additional funds through a matching grant program.

I'll bet you can vividly remember your favorite children's book and the time you spent reading with your family.

THIS is the power of books, and Dolly Parton tells us - Dream More, Learn More, Care More and Be More.

We also urge a favorable report. Thank you.