



January 20, 2022

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB108 Charles County Public Library Imagination Library Program funding

This letter is in support of SB108 to assist Charles County Public Library to provide all children aged 0-5 in Charles County the opportunity to enroll in the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), a book gifting program that mails free, high quality books to children, from birth to age five, no matter their family's income.

Caroline County Public Library is the agency in Caroline County which manages DPIL in Caroline County. We began our program in 2015 and have been fortunate to have strong Caroline County partners to both promote it and find funding for it. We are a small county and average around 1250 active participants (aged 0-5) with over 1,631 children having graduated as of January 2021. Also as of January 2021, there were a total of 69,316 Imagination Library books in Caroline County homes. The impact of this program is huge. I believe it brings a measure of equity to all children being ready for kindergarten. There are studies that state that there is a correlation between enrollment in DPIL and a child's Kindergarten readiness assessment score.

Thankfully, we have never had to put a child on a waiting list. I understand that Charles County Public Library has just recently begun the program in Charles County and its team members are working to create a secure funding base so that they never have to turn a child away from the program due to lack of funds. Serving a much larger county than ours with many more children aged 0-5 to serve is a much bigger challenge than what we faced and continue to manage.

I see this as an opportunity for the State to partner with Charles County Public Library to help build a robust and sustaining DPIL program in Charles County to help prepare their children for kindergarten and put them on a path to a successful education.

Sincerely,

Debby Bennett
Executive Director

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North County Branch
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