



Senate Bill 438

*Young Readers Programs – Establishment
(Young Readers Program Expansion Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: March 31, 2022

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 438. This bill would solidify the Baltimore City Young Readers Program in partnership with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and would create a mechanism for other jurisdictions to establish their own affiliate programs to support the learning and growth of young readers around the state.

Since its establishment in 2016, the Baltimore City Young Readers Program has successfully provided free, high-quality literature and resources to thousands of Baltimore children under the age of 5 and their families, regardless of the families' income status. The program has proved beneficial for Baltimore's children in many ways, including improving literacy levels, increasing parent-child interaction, and better preparing children before they enter school.

SB 438 permanently solidifies the Baltimore City Young Readers Program by providing an annual budget allocation to support the program so that it can continue to do this good work for Baltimore's kids. Importantly, the bill would also aid other local jurisdictions in establishing affiliate Young Readers Programs through the creation of a matching grant fund to help offset the costs of setting up and implementing the program.

All counties share in the goals of encouraging reading in young children, deepening literacy, and preparing kids to be successful in school. Counties pursue these goals in a variety of ways, including through the support of our local systems of public education, and through community partnerships. SB 438 would expand counties' resources to pursue these goals. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 438 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.