



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 0546, Service Year Option Program - Establishment
(Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023)**

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Benjamin Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 141
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee:

The Literacy Lab is a nonprofit organization committed to closing the literacy gap for Maryland's youngest learners. We recruit, train, and support early literacy tutors who have committed to serve for a full school year in a high-need Maryland public school. The Literacy Lab operates two distinct tutoring programs, Reading Corps and the Leading Men Fellowship. The Reading Corps model is an AmeriCorps program serving students in grades Pre-K through 3rd. The Leading Men Fellowship recruits and trains young men of color, ages 18-24 to serve as literacy tutors in Pre-K classrooms. The Literacy Lab currently partners with 22 schools in Baltimore City and 1 school in Prince George's County, serving over 1,000 Maryland students every day.

We are writing to express support for House Bill 0546, Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023. As a service year program, one of our most significant and consistent challenges has been recruiting enough tutors to meet the needs of our students and school partners in Maryland public schools. Establishing a state Service Year Option will help programs like ours meet the needs of our local communities by engaging more young Marylanders in service and providing them with critical benefits. This legislation will help address critical statewide issues, such as education, while also providing meaningful career development to young Marylanders.

For these reasons, we urge the committees to issue a favorable report for House Bill 0546.

Aamir Mansoor,
Director of Government and Corporate Partnerships
The Literacy Lab