



WASHINGTON COUNTY
FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
SB300 – Baltimore City Young Readers Program – Expansion and Alterations
February 22, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members,

I am writing in **Support of SB300 – Baltimore City Young Readers Program – Expansion and Alterations.**

The expansion of the existing Baltimore City Young Readers Matching Grant Program to the entire state of Maryland would be revolutionary for many of our state's youngest readers. This increase in service capacity would allow those in Maryland's most vulnerable homes the opportunity to be better prepared for formal education, as reading materials would be delivered to their homes once a month free of charge. The pride of ownership of a personal library that can be revisited many times over does wonders for a child that may be experiencing volatility in their young lives.

Washington County would especially benefit from this service, as the current service provider (Washington County Community Foundation) for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, the national program that provides free materials to young readers, has been unable to provide funding support to this program. If funded for all of Maryland, the 8,577 children under the age of five in Washington County would be impacted in an incredibly positive way.

In today's fragile economic environment, providing this free service to children where they are assures that fewer younger people are at a disadvantage as they move through our state's education system.

Again, thank you for supporting SB300.

Respectfully,

Jenny L. Bakos
Executive Director
Washington County Free Library