

Written Testimony in Favor of HB 243  
Baltimore Young Readers Program –  
(Expansion & Alterations), Hearing  
Before the Ways and Means Committee  
February 8, 2023

Madam Chair and Honored Members of the Committee,

Citizens for Maryland Libraries (CML), wish to voice its strong support for this bill. CML is a non-profit association that works to build greater public awareness of the need for the services that Maryland libraries across the state provide its citizens. Recognizing the importance of our public libraries to the over three million card carrying library users, CML is a strong statewide network of individuals and organizations who value and advocate for Maryland libraries.

To read and read well is the single best predictor that a child will be successful in school and successful in life.

The Baltimore Young Readers Program, in partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, has been successful and deserves to be expanded statewide under the administrative guidance of the Maryland State Library Agency. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was founded with the dedication and vision of Ms. Parton. Children, birth to age five, from economically challenged communities, are introduced to the love of reading by receiving books free of charge. The cost of funding is shared by Dolly Parton and local community partners. Today, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is inspiring a love of reading to children throughout the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and Republic of Ireland.

Who serving on this committee, doesn't remember a book from their childhood that was read and reread over and over until its well-loved pages were a bit tattered and soiled but still lovingly preserved on a bookshelf with other books equally valued. How many on the committee now see this being repeated with their own children as they in turn begin the journey of loving to read. Please let this be the experience of all of Maryland's children by supporting HB243.

Submitted by, Mary Baykan, Member of the Board on behalf  
Citizens for Maryland Library