

Chair Brian Feldman
Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for HB 475

My name is Erin Parker, and I am testifying in support of HB475.

I am the parent of a child with dyslexia and a founding member of the Howard County Chapter of Decoding Dyslexia, and we help parents encountering the same problems that I will describe.

When my son was diagnosed when he was 7, his school denied him eligibility for special education, leaving it entirely to me to figure out how to help him.

I was at a loss.

He struggled with phonemic and phonological awareness, which is the ability to recognize and manipulate the individual sounds and parts of spoken words.

He also struggled with letter/sound association, which is recognizing the relationship of the letters in the alphabet to the sounds they produce.

I learned about the science of reading.

The science of reading is an evidence-based instructional practice that emphasizes the importance of phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in developing strong literacy skills.

What I was unable to find was free resources based on the science of reading that I could use to work with my child to teach him to read.

Instructional materials can be cost prohibitive for parents.

I was lucky and was able to find a tutor who had been trained in the science of reading and was able to afford tutoring, which cost \$160 for 2 hours a week.

Tutoring wasn't enough, and I eventually sent him to private school, which costs \$40,000 per year.

Most parents cannot afford tutoring or private school.

Parents generally lack an understanding of which programs are based on the science of reading when they try to select materials.

Having a grant that would be administered by the Maryland State Department of Education to create instructional materials that could be used by parents and tutors would give parents confidence that they can help their children.

MSDE would review the grant proposals to ensure that the materials being created would align with the science of reading so that parents know that what they are selecting would actually be beneficial.

Maryland ranks 40th among the United States in reading based on fourth-grade scores and 25th based on eighth-grade scores on the Natl Assessment for Educational Proficiency test (NAEP).

If we are going to fix these deficiencies, we need to adopt the science of reading across the board, with teachers, tutors, and parents all using materials that align to the science of reading.

HB475 will help create and promote those materials so that parents can help their own children.