

To: House Ways and Means Committee

Subject: Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant Program Act (HB 475)

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Atterbeary:

I am Dr. Rona Schwartz, a family physician who lives in Maryland and has worked in Washington D.C. for over 17 years. I am also on the Steering Committee of Open Source Phonics and support HB 475 because it will encourage nonprofits to create more resources for families who struggle with reading.

The majority of my patients are low-income. I often talk to parents about how their children are doing in school—parents are confused and anxious when their children struggle. Sometimes they wonder if their children are unmotivated to do well or if there are other barriers to their learning, like being unable to read.

In addition to seeing parents concerned about their children's progress in school, I also see patients who are low literacy themselves and see how struggles with literacy impact their lives and wellness in a variety of ways, including following up on suggestions that would benefit their health.

When physicians serve patients who are struggling financially, we do not want to recommend programs or resources that come with a cost that will add to the family's burdens. We are constantly looking for no-cost resources—whether for nutrition, mental health, summer camps, tutoring, or fitness.

I support HB 475 because it will provide free resources to parents looking to help their children with literacy. Because the Maryland State Department of Education would administer the grant, parents could be assured that the resources would be effective. For physicians like myself, who are not

experts in literacy, and for social workers, nurses, and others who work with families having recommendations for free resources that are free and high quality would be very helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the first letters of the first and last names, 'R' and 'S', followed by a stylized flourish.

Rona Schwartz MD