

To: House Ways and Means Committee

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

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Atterbeary:

My name is Jaclyn Paris, and I am testifying in support of HB475.

I am a Special Educator who has taught children to read in both Baltimore County Public Schools as well as The Highlands School (a private school for children with dyslexia and other learning differences). Parents, realizing their child is not learning to read in the public schools, will spend thousands of dollars on tutoring and private school if they can afford it.

Unfortunately, I had not been trained in the Science of Reading in college and as I taught my first year back in 1995-1996, I was unable to help the kids who struggled with reading. Devastated, I sought training in Orton-Gillingham over that summer and was then able to teach the same children to now read the following year! The student who could not read at all, learned how to read on a 2nd grade level in only one year, all because of the Science of Reading! I've been passionate about helping all children Learn to Read ever since I knew there was a solution to illiteracy!

In 2014, I started volunteering to help Decoding Dyslexia Maryland (DDMD) as the Community Partner Outreach Coordinator. DDMD is a grassroots movement to help parents understand why their child is not learning to read, to advocate for laws to be passed to screen children in Kindergarten, and to have teachers trained in the Science of Reading. I knew there was no reason to wait for a child to fall further and further behind before intervening.

THANKFULLY, The Ready to Read Act passed in 2019, Thanks to the support of the legislators that members of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland were able to meet with over the years, they came to support the Bill Unanimously! Children are now screened in Kindergarten 3x a year and parents are contacted if their child is determined to need intervention.

Maryland continued to progress on January 23, 2024 when The Maryland State Board of Education called for all Maryland public schools to use the Science of Reading methods starting the 2024-2025 school year! Hopefully parents will not have to pay outside sources exorbitant amounts of money for this necessary life skill.

I am 100% behind the Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant Program Act (HB 475)! Especially because MSDE would review the materials to ensure they align with the Science of Reading. This would be an invaluable source for parents, teachers, and all those involved in helping a child learn to read to access FREE resources!

I honestly cannot thank the legislators and MSDE enough for advancing the Science of Reading in public schools! Supporting HB 475 would be one more big step in helping all children learn to read!

Thank you,

Jaclyn Paris
Special Educator