



# Maryland READS

Reading Education Aligned to Data and Science

February 17, 2025

Chairman Guy Guzzone  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Guzzone:

We applaud Governor Moore's leadership in prioritizing education and reading. This urgent action is required to address our state's reading crisis. The [Maryland Excellence in Public Schools Act](#) takes a critical step forward in rebuilding our state systems of support for education by formalizing training programs for state, district and school leaders that are grounded in the use of data, research based strategies, and collaborative learning. Investments in reading must be front and center on the state's agenda and a well-researched and designed approach to coaching is a necessary component.

Superintendent Wright and the team at the Maryland State Department of Education have laid a critical foundation for the improvement of reading instruction - the backbone of any state's effort to address its reading crisis. In addition to securing private funding to underwrite professional development in the Science of Reading for teachers and leaders, they collaborated with experts to develop a [research-based coaching model and professional learning series for literacy coaches](#). The education investments in this act are critical to ensure that teachers throughout our state are supported by highly qualified and professionally trained literacy coaches.

For too long, we have prioritized talking about college and career while overlooking the foundational importance of reading, neglecting the essential building blocks for success. Consider these facts. The [Kirwan Commission Final Report](#), the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#), and the [2022 AIB Annual Report](#) all emphasize college and career readiness, yet reading—crucial for both—is scarcely mentioned.

- The Kirwan Report mentions college 31 times and career 65 times, with just 4 references to reading.
- Similarly, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future highlights college 78 times and career 173 times, but reading is only mentioned 5 times.
- The AIB Annual Report similarly downplays reading, with a single bullet point making two references to it.

This stark imbalance suggests that without a solid foundation in literacy, efforts to prepare students for higher education and career success are fundamentally flawed. **Focusing on college and career without ensuring strong reading skills first is like giving a teenager the keys to a car without having them pass a driving test. Just because they take a driving course, does not mean they are safe and effective drivers. Reading is the foundation upon which all other learning is built. We cannot afford to overlook this essential area any longer.**

We commend Superintendent Carey Wright for moving swiftly to secure \$6.8 million in **private funding** from the Ibis Foundation to provide critical professional opportunities to our state's teachers and leaders. These programs provide education on the fundamentals of the Science of Reading as well as special focus courses on dyslexia, English learnings, literacy leadership, and the unique needs of adolescent learners. Consider these facts:

- Over 1,300 teachers and administrators have enrolled in the [AIM Pathways](#) professional learning opportunities and
- Over 4,300 educators (Pre-service and in-service) enrolled in the [SoR/SUNY New Paltz micro-credential](#)

While this is necessary progress, it's just the start of what is needed to transform instruction in order to make dramatic progress in addressing our reading crisis. This is a time of competing priorities, and the legislature will face tough choices. But if we do not prioritize reading, the impact of every other educational investment will be compromised.

Take community schools. While much criticism is being leveled against the Blueprint and the AIB, the investment in community schools was a good one. It resulted in the expansion of community schools from 69 to over 650 which is a positive step forward. These schools play a crucial role in **advancing thriving reading ecosystems** within our communities. However, it's critical that the teachers and leaders in those schools are trained in instructional strategies grounded in the Science of Reading and supported by coaches so they can apply that training to their daily instructional practices.

We saw in Mississippi that the key to transforming training into meaningful results lies in coaches who support teachers. Without teachers and leaders trained in evidence-based Science of Reading instruction, who are **supported by coaches to implement what they have learned**, the role of community schools as a part of the solution to our reading crisis is less impactful than it could be.

While funding for community schools has stalled, investing in coaches is an investment in community schools, teachers in all Maryland schools, and the future of our children. These coaches will empower educators to bridge the gap and turn science-backed strategies into real, measurable results in the classroom.

*"We have been delighted to see how well the training programs provided by IBIS, specifically the SUNY microcredential, teach the Science of Reading, and provide concrete information and materials to support teachers in delivering aligned instruction. We also urge the Maryland Legislature to support Superintendent Wright in capitalizing on these programs by adequately investing in literacy coaches who can support teachers in delivering that aligned instruction with adequate support to each and every student."*  
*Whitney Nyman, professor and member of Maryland READS Expert Advisory Delegation*

As Superintendent Wright often says, "Reading is the gateway to every other subject." We must make that gateway accessible to every Maryland student. Let's make these investments now and ensure that reading becomes the pillar of success for every child in our state.