



WASHINGTON COUNTY  
FREE LIBRARY

*Where People & Possibilities Meet*

February 12, 2025

Senator Brian J. Feldman  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee members,

The Washington County Free Library supports **SB378 – State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program – Establishment**. This initiative will strengthen family bonds, promote literacy, and improve outcomes for incarcerated parents and their children.

Research has shown that children with incarcerated parents face unique challenges, including increased risk for emotional distress, lower educational attainment, and disrupted family bonds. By enabling parents to record picture book stories for their children, this program will not only promote literacy but also help sustain meaningful connections between parents and their families during incarceration. Family literacy initiatives like the successful Wicomico County Public Library's Storybook Program serve as powerful models for how libraries can bridge the gap between incarceration and family engagement.

With approximately 32,000 individuals incarcerated in Maryland—many of whom are parents and located in one of Washington County's three MCI facilities—this program presents a crucial opportunity to break cycles of illiteracy and economic hardship. National data indicate that 70% of incarcerated individuals are functionally illiterate, and many lacked access to books in their own childhoods. By promoting reading within correctional facilities and fostering home libraries for children, this initiative will help create a print-rich environment that supports both immediate and long-term educational success.

Furthermore, this program aligns closely with the Moore-Miller Administration's priorities to break cycles of poverty, support childhood education, and build stronger communities. By investing in family literacy, Maryland is investing in the well-being of its children, the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals, and the future economic stability of families across the state. On behalf of the Washington County Free Library, I urge legislative and financial support for this vital program and look forward to contributing to its success.

Sincerely,

Jenny L. Bakos  
Executive Director  
Washington County Free Library