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BILL: SB378 – State Library Agency- Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment **DATE:** February 12, 2025

SUBJECT: Encouraging family literacy in state prison systems **COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy and the Environment

TESTIMONY FROM: Carrie Willson, Executive Director, Calvert Library **POSITION:** Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Committee,

I respectfully request support of **Senate Bill 378 State Library Agency- Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment**. This bill establishes a pilot project at four MD correctional facilities to enable parents and grandparents who are incarcerated to send a recording of them reading an age-appropriate children’s book to their little one.

Calvert Library’s Mobile Services team had a similar program in partnership with our County Detention facility called Families Reading Together. We were gratified to see the participants confidence in reading aloud improve in just one coaching session, some having never before read aloud to their child. Both inmates and family members at home expressed that it was a very positive and healthy bonding experience during separation. The inmates expressed their gratitude for an opportunity to connect with their child.

I encourage your support for SB378 which creates opportunity for positive family engagement, promotes improved mental health outcomes for children with an incarcerated parent or grandparent. It fosters engagement with approachable reading material and puts books in the homes of children. There is strong correlation between having books in the home and long-term economic and social outcomes, including increased academic success. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Carrie Willson
Executive Director, Calvert Library

