

Testimony in Support of SB 378.pdf

Uploaded by: Alonzo Washington

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB 378 - State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program -
Establishment**

SB 378 aims to establish the Family Literacy Pilot Program to enable certain incarcerated individuals to read aloud to their children or grandchildren through preparation of a recording.

This bill aims to increase literacy in households and improve connections within families that are facing separation due to incarceration. A near majority of incarcerated individuals have children, and often children who have parent(s) absent due to incarceration face struggles in obtaining adequate literacy. This program has been enacted and shown success in twenty other states throughout the United States.

SB 378 in establishment of the Family Literacy Pilot Program takes in account:

- The program will be run by the Maryland State Library Agency, in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Correctional Education Council.
- The program will have the Maryland State Library Agency curate a collection of books to be provided within the program, with the requirement of at least some bilingual books as well as books in foreign languages.
- The recording and book paired together will be provided to the child (or grandchild) at no charge to the parent during the administering of the pilot program.
- The program will be delivered efficiently with prison librarians who will guide inmates in choosing a book appropriate to their child or grandchild's age and will facilitate distribution of the book and recording to the child or grandchild.
- The program has a requirement of written permission for the parent or guardian for their child to participate in the Family Literacy Pilot Program.
- The program will be required to serve each region in Maryland in the administration of the limitation of four libraries in prisons; and provide the program to at least one institution housing male inmates, and at least one institution housing female inmates.

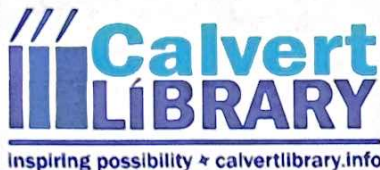
In conclusion, SB 378 will improve both the literacy rates of incarcerated individuals and their children struggling in schools, while facilitating strengthened familial bonds in households with incarcerated parent(s).

Therefore, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 378.

Letter in support of SB378_Carrie_Willson.pdf

Uploaded by: Carrie Willson

Position: FAV



Carrie Willson, Executive Director • carrie.willson@calvertlibrary.info
850 Costley Way • Prince Frederick, MD 20678 • 410-535-0291 • 301-855-1862

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



SB378 State Library Agency-Family Literacy Pilot P

Uploaded by: Janet Salazar

Position: FAV



Centreville Branch: 121 S. Commerce St., Centreville MD 21617
410.758.0980

Kent Island Branch: 200 Library Circle, Stevensville, MD 21666
410.643.8161

Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee
SB 378 – State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program – Establishment
February 12, 2025
Support/Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of SB 378 – State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program – Establishment.

The legislation creates a family literacy partnership between the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) and the Department of Labor (which oversees education programs in correctional facilities, including the state's 12 prison librarians) to develop a 3-year pilot at 4 correctional facility sites situated throughout the state. The pilot program will assist inmates in recording picture book stories for their children and grandchildren. Children and families will also benefit from increased engagement with the pilot library system. Wicomico County Public Library's partnership with the Wicomico County Correctional Center around the Storybook Program is a great model.

This pilot program supports the Moore-Miller Administration's priorities to end childhood poverty by ending cycles and helping create sustained long-term wealth, setting Maryland's students up for success, creating an equitable, robust, competitive economy, and creating safer communities. Using general funds and possible added state funding, MSLA will partner with pilot library sites to develop and implement the program and administer grants to fund operating costs.

The Queen Anne's County Library already has an established partnership with the Queen Anne's County Detention Center to provide updated books for the center's library. This year we are expanding this partnership to provide some programs to help with resume building and job searching skills. We call this partnership the Empowerment Library and it was established using LSTA grant funds administered through MSLA. A pilot project such as the Family Literacy Program would be a natural next step in our partnership, should we be chosen as a pilot library site.

Family Literacy programs provide an opportunity to connect children with an incarcerated parent in a positive way. Studies show that creating a connection between a parent and child fosters family engagement. These Family Literacy programs help keep families together and increase the chances of a parent remaining in the home and connected to family upon release from prison. There is a strong correlation between literacy and long-term economic and social outcomes, including higher educational attainment and increased academic success, even when controlling for factors like parental education level and socioeconomic status.

Queen Anne's County Library supports the passage of SB 378. I respectfully ask for your support of this budget item, which will help increase the literacy of the 32,000 incarcerated individuals in Maryland and help these families stay connected and engaged.

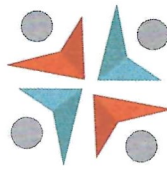
Thank you for your consideration,

Janet Salazar
Director

SB378_Support_WCFL.pdf

Uploaded by: Jenny Bakos

Position: FAV



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

SB 378 Family Literacy Pilot (2025).pdf

Uploaded by: Megan Sutherland

Position: FAV



State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment
Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 12, 2025
SUPPORT

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) strongly supports **SB 378 State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment**. The legislation would create a family literacy partnership between the Maryland State Library Agency and the Department of Labor (which oversees education programs in correctional facilities, including the state's 12 prison librarians) to develop a 3-year pilot at four correctional facility sites throughout the state. The pilot program will assist inmates in recording picture book stories for their children and grandchildren. This program would build on the success of existing models, such as Wicomico County Public Library's Storybook Program partnership with the Wicomico County Correctional Center.

There are approximately 32,000 individuals incarcerated in Maryland. Nationally, it is estimated that 47% of individuals in state prisons are parents of minor children, and about 1 in 5 of those children are four years old or younger. Children with a parent in the justice system may experience low self-esteem, depression, disturbed sleeping patterns, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Family literacy programs such as the ones that will be created with this pilot help keep families engaged and increase the chances of a parent remaining in the home and connected to their family upon release from prison. There is a strong correlation between literacy and long-term economic and social outcomes, including higher educational attainment and increased academic success, even when controlling for factors like parental education level and socioeconomic status.

PGCMLS provides library services to the detainees at the Prince George's County Correctional Center in Upper Marlboro. Our Librarians at the Correctional Center work to engage detainees, their families, and staff in literacy-supporting activities and programs. This incredibly powerful work has positive outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. We ask that you **favorably recommend SB 378** for passage.

Sincerely,

Mark Winston, Ph. D.
CEO

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAVSB378_.pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 12, 2025
SB378

**State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 378**. The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 378 would establish the Family Literacy Pilot Program, administered by the State Library Agency in partnership with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Correctional Education Council. The program allows incarcerated individuals to record themselves reading aloud to their children, fostering family connections and promoting literacy. A report on the program's impact will be submitted by December 1, 2028.

Catholic social teaching upholds the dignity of every person, including those who are incarcerated, and emphasizes the importance of family unity. This legislation aligns with the Church's call for restorative justice by recognizing the human dignity of incarcerated individuals and fostering positive family relationships. Supporting this bill reflects a commitment to mercy, rehabilitation, and the well-being of families affected by incarceration.

By encouraging literacy and family bonding, this bill helps maintain vital parent-child relationships despite incarceration. Strengthening these connections can improve child development, reduce recidivism rates, and support successful reintegration into society. The initiative also promotes early childhood literacy, giving children of incarcerated parents better educational foundations and long-term opportunities.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a favorable report for **Senate Bill 378**.

SB378 support letter M Farmer.pdf

Uploaded by: Mychelle Farmer

Position: FAV

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman

Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB378- State Library Agency- Family Literacy Pilot Program -Establishment

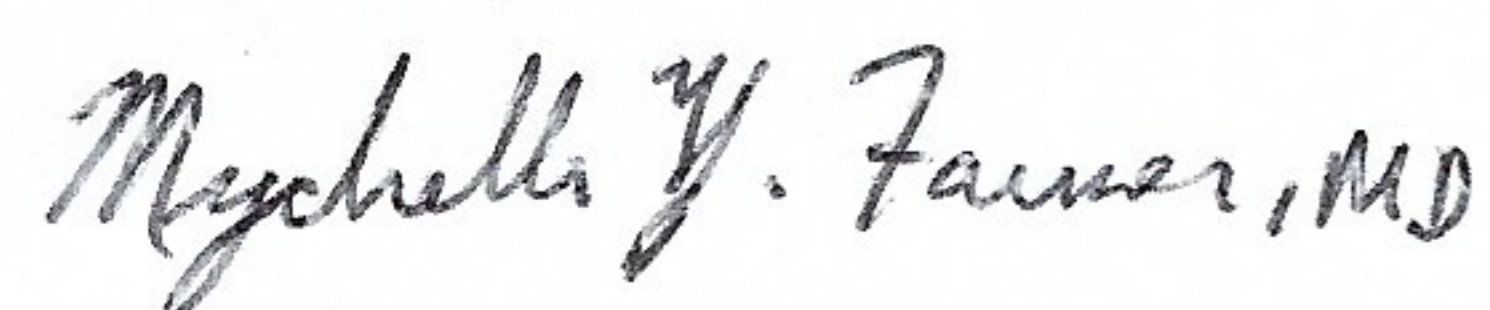
Dear Chair Feldman:

I am writing to affirm my support for SB378, to establish the Family Literacy Pilot Program in Maryland. The legislation creates a family literacy partnership between the Maryland State Library Agency and the State Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. This will be a three-year pilot program, to be introduced at four correctional facilities, located in various areas throughout the state. Program participants, who are parents of young children, will be allowed to prepare a recording as they read aloud selected children's books. The recording will be shared with their children. I believe this program will be of great benefit to inmates' families, by promoting positive interaction between children and their parents.

Nationwide, 47% of incarcerated individuals are parents, and nearly 1 in 5 of these children are less than five years of age.¹ This finding is probably applicable to Maryland's 32,000 inmates. Since many children throughout Maryland are adversely affected by incarceration of a parent, such recordings strengthen parent-child relationships and will promote family unity.

The Maryland State Library Agency will administer this program, to ensure the selection of children's books that are both age-appropriate and consistent with the inmate's literacy level. Both male and female inmates will participate in this program. As the vice-chair of the Maryland State Library Board, I am confident that the program will be of highest quality. I favor this bill because it will provide great benefits to families separated due to incarceration.

Sincerely,



Mychelle Y. Farmer, MD

Vice Chair, Maryland State Library Board

Cc: Senator A. Washington

¹ Wang L, Both sides of the bar: how mass incarceration punishes families, Prison Policy Initiative, 2022 accessed online: [Both sides of the bars: How mass incarceration punishes families | Prison Policy Initiative](#)

SUPPORT SB378 -State Library Agency - Family Liter

Uploaded by: Nicholas Brown-Cáceres

Position: FAV

NICHOLAS ALEXANDER BROWN-CÁCERES

nabconductor@gmail.com

nicholasalexanderbrown.com •  [nabrown88](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nabrown88)

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Energy, Education and the Environment Committee
Maryland Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT for SB 378 - State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment

Dear Chairman Feldman,

I am pleased to write on behalf of the Maryland State Library Board and as a library executive residing in Prince George's County to request your support for SB378 - State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment. This bill will establish a family literacy partnership between the Maryland State Library Agency and the Department of Labor (which oversees education programs in correctional facilities, including the state's 12 prison librarians) to develop a three-year pilot at four correctional facility sites throughout the state. The pilot program will assist inmates in recording picture book stories for their children and grandchildren. When children read with loved ones they acquire vocabulary, see themselves reflected in the world, and strengthen their bonds with parents and guardians. These moments of connection can positively impact the children and adults, setting the children on a path for educational and career achievement in future years. Children and families will also benefit from increased engagement with the pilot library system. Wicomico County Public Library's partnership with the Wicomico County Correctional Center around the Storybook Program is a great model.

This pilot program will begin to serve families with young children who have a parent/guardian in prison. Over 32,000 individuals are incarcerated in Maryland, with an estimated 20,000 children in Baltimore alone having a parent who is incarcerated or on parole/probation. Across the nation, nearly half (47%) of the approximately 1.25 million people in state prisons are parents of minor children, and about 1 in 5 (19%) of those children is age 4 or younger.

Family Literacy Programs also promote reading among inmates, where 70% of inmates are functionally illiterate, according to National Adult Literacy Survey data. Many incarcerated individuals share that they never read to or had books at home. In addition to helping develop family bonding and interest in reading for both the inmates and the children at home, Family Literacy programs build home libraries and print-rich environments, which leads to greater awareness of print and an interest in reading.

As a Prince George's County resident, I appreciate Senator Washington's bill sponsorship. When I served as the COO for Communication and Outreach at the Prince George's County Memorial Library System, I championed the important work of our County Correctional Center Library in meeting the needs of incarcerated Marylanders daily. The family literacy partnership proposed in SB378 is an outstanding opportunity to give Marylanders in the justice system and their families an opportunity to connect in a way that strengthens family ties and advances youth literacy.

This pilot program supports the Moore-Miller Administration's priorities to end childhood poverty by ending cycles and helping create sustained long-term wealth, setting Maryland's students up for success, creating an equitable, robust, and competitive economy, and creating safer communities.

Thank you for your tremendous and sustained support of the essential role that public libraries play in supporting Marylanders' daily education, enrichment, and social services needs. The Family Literacy Pilot Program aims to continue the good work of Maryland Libraries in giving some of our most vulnerable neighbors—the children of incarcerated adults—an early opportunity to develop literacy skills.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Brown-Caceres', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nicholas Alexander Brown-Cáceres

Member at-Large, Maryland State Library Board

Chair, American Library Association Public Awareness Committee

CCPL_Testimony_Family Literacy Pilot Program_SB 37

Uploaded by: Rachel Wright

Position: FAV

BILL:	SB 378	DATE:	February 10, 2025
SUBJECT:	State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program – Establishment	COMMITTEE:	Education, Energy, and the Environment
TESTIMONY FROM:	Rachel Wright, Executive Director, Cecil County Public Library	POSITION:	Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

Cecil County Public Library (CCPL) fully supports **SB 378 – State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program – Establishment.**

Family literacy programs are a core offering of public libraries. They provide opportunities for children to connect in a positive, nurturing way with beloved parents and/or grandparents while also promoting the importance of literacy. Though public libraries across Maryland routinely make these opportunities available to the communities they serve, individuals who are incarcerated are excluded from the benefits of such participation. Establishing a family literacy program, as proposed by MSLA, fosters positive family engagement experiences and will make it possible for a parent/grandparent who is incarcerated to create a lasting connection with their loved ones while sharing books and reading.

Establishing a family literacy pilot program, such as this, demonstrates to children and their caregivers the community’s commitment to their success and well-being and that the incarceration of a parent/grandparent does not have to result in the severing of a connection between loved ones. Children of individuals who are incarcerated bear the negative impact of this separation in both measurable and immeasurable ways. A family literacy program provides the opportunity for families to stay connected to one another, to enjoy and appreciate reading together, and to feel supported by the greater community.

With the strong correlation between literacy and long-term economic and social outcomes, this pilot program supports the Moore-Miller Administration’s priorities to end childhood poverty by ending cycles and helping create sustained long-term wealth, setting Maryland’s students up for success, creating an equitable, robust, and competitive economy, and creating safer communities.

Fully providing funds needed to establish the Family Literacy Pilot Program will ensure children of incarcerated parents have the opportunity to engage in activities that promote family engagement and literacy- the benefits of which will extend far longer than the time it takes an individual who is incarcerated to record themselves reading a picture book. The impact that this will have on the child or grandchild will be felt for years to come. 70% of inmates are functionally illiterate and many have shared that they were never read to and did not have access to books in their home. Introducing positive literacy experiences into their families can lead to new family traditions and experiences and end the very generational cycles the Moore-Miller Administration have committed to address.

Studies have also shown that participation in a family literacy program has improved literacy outcomes for the individual who is incarcerated. Through this program, individuals can be motivated by the engagement and inspired by the opportunity to read to their loved one; thus leading them to a greater awareness of print and an interest in reading. Improved literacy skills and/or interest in reading and learning can lead to positive

outcomes for incarcerated individuals for the time they remain incarcerated, as well as if/when the individual returns to their community.

The establishment of a Family Literacy Pilot program will benefit the children, the individual who is incarcerated, and the entire community.

Please support **SB 378 – State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program – Establishment.**

Thank you for your ongoing support of Maryland libraries and communities.

Truly,



Rachel Wright
Executive Director, Cecil County Public Library
485 Mauldin Avenue
North East, MD 21901

SB378 Howard.pdf

Uploaded by: Stephanie Shane

Position: FAV



HOWARD COUNTY
LIBRARY SYSTEM

Learn. Grow. Connect.

Testimony in support of SB 378: State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment
Hearing before the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 10, 2025
Submitted by Tonya Aikens, Howard County Library System President & CEO

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express support for **SB 378: State Library Agency – Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment**.

This legislation creates a family literacy partnership between the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) and the Department of Labor (which oversees education programs in correctional facilities, including the state’s 12 prison librarians) to develop a 3-year pilot at four correctional facility sites situated throughout the state.

The pilot program will assist inmates in recording picture book stories for their children and grandchildren. Children and families will also benefit from increased engagement with the pilot library system. Wicomico County Public Library already partners with the Wicomico County Correctional Center, and their Storybook Program is a model for the rest of the state.

Using general funds and possible added state funding, MSLA will partner with pilot library sites to develop and implement the program and administer grants to fund operating costs.

Approximately 32,000 individuals are incarcerated in Maryland, with more than 2,000 at the two facilities in Howard County. Across the nation, nearly half of the people in state prisons are parents of minor children (about 1 in 5 of those children is age 4 or younger).

Family literacy programs also promote reading amongst inmates, where 70 percent are functionally illiterate, according to data from the National Adult Literacy Survey. Many incarcerated individuals share that they were never read to or had books in the home. In addition to helping develop family bonding and interest in reading for both the inmates and the children at home, family literacy programs build home libraries and print-rich environments, which leads to greater awareness of print and an interest in reading.

Children with a parent in prison may experience low self-esteem, depression, disturbed sleeping patterns, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. In a North American study, separation from a parent through imprisonment was found to be more detrimental to a child’s well-being than divorce or the death of a parent. Family literacy programs provide an opportunity to connect children with an incarcerated parent in a positive way, fostering family engagement. These programs help keep families together and increase the chances of a parent remaining in the home and connected to family upon release from prison.

There is a strong correlation between literacy and long-term economic and social outcomes, including higher educational attainment and increased academic success, even when controlling for factors like parental education level and socioeconomic status.

This pilot program supports the Moore-Miller Administration's priorities to end childhood poverty by ending cycles and helping create sustained long-term wealth, setting Maryland's students up for success, creating an equitable, robust, and competitive economy, and creating safer communities.

Thank you for your support of all members of our community. We ask that you **favorably recommend SB 378** for passage.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens,
President & CEO