



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 5, 2025

**HB415**

**State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment**

**Ways and Means Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 415**. 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.

**House Bill 415** 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 **House Bill 415**.