



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

**Ways and Means**

**February 5, 2025**

**SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Committee Members,

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) strongly supports **HB 415 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 HB 415** for passage.

Sincerely,

Mark Winston, Ph. D.  
CEO