



Testimony Concerning HB 415
“State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program - Establishment”
Submitted to the House Ways and Means Committee
February 5, 2025

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports HB 415, which would establish the Family Literacy Pilot Program enabling certain incarcerated individuals to read aloud to their children by preparing a recording.

Incarceration of a family member has been associated with adverse outcomes for child well-being. Parental incarceration has been linked to increased aggression, depression, and anxiety in their children. The trauma of parental incarceration for children is significant and is identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. ACEs can have long-term negative impacts on health, opportunity and well-being. HB 415 would offer a positive opportunity for parents and loved ones to engage with children's early development through reading.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and early childhood education as well as other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on child care policy and are strongly committed to ensuring that children, along with their parents, have access to high-quality, affordable programs and educational opportunities.

Sharing books with very young children supports emerging literacy. Providing a recording of a family member reading a book will enable the child to reread it over and over. Children learn by repetition and rereading a favorite book offers the child comfort and a sense of security. Additionally, relationships are essential to creating positive childhood experiences. Sharing a book can facilitate bonding and maintain familial relationships that contribute to positive family outcomes.

MFN urges a favorable report on HB 415.

Submitted by Beth Morrow, Director of Public Policy

