



## Re: Support for HB 415 – State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program

Dear Del. Vanessa E. Atterbeary and Del. Julie Palakovich Carr:

On behalf of the Maryland Book Bank, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 415 – State Library Agency - Family Literacy Pilot Program. This legislation presents an invaluable opportunity to support family literacy, foster parent-child connections, and strengthen home learning environments for some of Maryland's most vulnerable families.

At the Maryland Book Bank, we are deeply committed to expanding literacy access and providing books to children and families who need them most. The Family Literacy Pilot Program established by HB 415 aligns closely with this mission by ensuring that incarcerated parents have the opportunity to engage with their children in meaningful ways through storytelling and reading.

With approximately 32,000 individuals incarcerated in Maryland—many of whom are parents—this program will help address a critical gap in family engagement. Research shows that 47% of state prison inmates nationwide are parents of minor children, and in Baltimore alone, an estimated 20,000 children have a parent who is incarcerated or on parole/probation. The trauma of parental separation due to incarceration has been found to be more detrimental to a child's well-being than even divorce or the death of a parent.

Family literacy programs like the one proposed in HB 415 have been proven to foster positive parent-child relationships, encourage early childhood literacy, and improve long-term educational and social outcomes for children. Additionally, these programs benefit incarcerated parents, helping them develop literacy skills, improve their own reading abilities, and strengthen family bonds, ultimately aiding their successful reintegration into society.

We urge you and your colleagues to support HB 415 and make this critical investment in family literacy and community well-being. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to supporting literacy, families, and second chances.

Sincerely,

Mark Feiring  
Founding Executive Director  
The Maryland Book Bank



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