



2/3/2025

**Bill: HB 415**

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

**Committee: House and Ways Committee**

**Testimony From: Michael Blackwell, Director, St. Mary's County Library**

**Position: Support**

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkens, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Trustees, 74 employees, and 56,000+ card holders (including school student cards) of St. Mary's County Library, I urge you to support the establishment of the Family Literacy Pilot Program.

This legislation creates a family literacy partnership between the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) and the Department of Labor, which has oversight in the education programs in correctional facilities, including the state's 12 prison librarians. It will 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. 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.

There are approximately 32,000 individuals incarcerated in Maryland. 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.

This program will connect families in a difficult time, improve literacy among children and the incarcerated, and perhaps help young people connect in ways that will lower crime and allow them to forge a better future. I ask you to vote in support of it.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Blackwell", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Michael, Director, St. Mary's County Library  
23630 Hayden Farm Lane, Leonardtown MD 20650

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Administrative Offices  
23630 Hayden Farm Lane  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
301-475-2151  
FAX: 301-884-4415  
info@stmalib.org

Charlotte Hall Library  
37600 New Market Road  
Charlotte Hall, MD 20622  
301-884-2211  
FAX: 301-884-2113

Leonardtown Library  
23630 Hayden Farm Lane  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
301-475-2846  
FAX: 301-884-4415

Lexington Park Library  
21677 FDR Blvd  
Lexington Park, MD 20653  
301-863-8188  
FAX: 301-863-2550

[www.stmalib.org](http://www.stmalib.org)