



March 6, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee

**RE: Support for House Bill 1277 - Education - Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity
- Establishment**

Dear Chair Barnes, Chair Atterbeary, and Members of the Committees:

On behalf of Wicomico Public Library, I write in support of House Bill 1277, which would establish the Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity as a State-funded partnership between the University of Maryland, College Park and Morgan State University to promote literacy across Maryland.

Public libraries are among the State's most accessible literacy institutions. Every day, libraries support early literacy, school readiness, family literacy, reading engagement, and lifelong learning. HB1277 is important because it recognizes that strong literacy outcomes depend not only on schools, but also on partnerships with community organizations and out-of-school learning environments, including public libraries.

Wicomico Public Library supports this legislation because a statewide center focused on research, technical assistance, training, and community partnership would help ensure that literacy efforts are evidence-based and responsive to Maryland's diverse communities. Literacy is not confined to the classroom, and libraries play an important role in reaching children and families where they are.

This bill is also meaningful to our library because of its connection to existing literacy work supported through Maryland libraries. The Maryland Institute for Literacy and Equity supports public libraries participating in LSTA-funded literacy projects, including the IMLS-funded Hatchlings project. Wicomico Public Library was among the systems that piloted the original Hatchlings program, and we are encouraged by the opportunity for library systems statewide to pilot the new culturally responsive adaptation in partnership with MILE.



For these reasons, Wicomico Public Library respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1277.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seth Hershberger', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Seth Hershberger
Executive Director
Wicomico Public Library