



October 2, 2025

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

TO: Colette R. Gresham, Esq.
Acting Council Administrator

Karen Zavakos
Acting Deputy Council Administrator

THRU: Lavinia Baxter 
Senior Legislative and Budget Policy Analyst

FROM: David Noto 
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement
CR-088-2025

CR-088-2025 (*Proposed by:* Council Member Oriadha)

Assigned to the Education and Workforce Development Committee

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING IMPROVING PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY'S LITERACY for the purpose of establishing the Prince George's County Literacy Commission to develop strategic initiatives to assess, address, and improve literacy rates among residents in Prince George's County.

Fiscal Summary

Direct Impact

Expenditures: No anticipated impact on expenditures.

Revenues: No anticipated impact on revenues.

Indirect Impact

Likely Favorable.

Legislative Summary:

CR-088-2025¹ proposed by Council Member Oriadha and cosponsored by Council Members Oriadha, Watson, Blegay, Adams-Stafford, Dernoga, Ivey, Fisher, and Burroughs, would establish a Literacy Commission to assess, address, and improve literacy rates among residents in Prince George's County. Literacy gaps within the County limit employment opportunities, economic mobility, and disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities. The Commission would be composed of educators, community leaders, and nonprofit partners. The Commission would make recommendations to the Prince George's County Board of Education and the Prince George's County Council on effective policies, initiatives, and remedies.

The Commission would be comprised of the following 14 members:

1. Two (2) representatives from Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), appointed by the Superintendent.
2. One (1) representative from Bowie State University.
3. One (1) representative from the University of Maryland.
4. One (1) representative from the Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS).
5. One (1) representative from the Prince George's County State Delegation.
6. One (1) representative from Employ Prince George's.
7. One (1) representative from Prince George's Community College.
8. Three (3) representatives from literacy-focused nonprofit organizations, appointed by the Chair of the County Council.
9. One (1) faith-based community leader, appointed by the Chair of the Council.
10. One (1) representative from a Parent Teacher Association within the County, appointed by the Chair of the County Council.
11. One (1) representative from a civic association, appointed by the Chair of the County Council.

The Commission is tasked with conducting comprehensive assessments to identify literacy gaps among different populations within the County, designing and implementing programs tailored to their needs, and engaging with community members and institutions to promote literacy. The Commission is also entrusted with providing recommendations to the Board of Education and the County Council on policies and funding allocations that promote the Commission's initiatives.

¹ [Prince George's County Council - Reference No. CR-088-2025](#)

Current Law/Background:

Federal law:

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) is a set of regular tests that measure public and private school students' performance in core subjects like math and reading.² Because of this, NAEP is also known as the “Nation’s Report Card.” Administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), NAEP scores provide a measure of student achievement across the nation, states, and large urban districts over time.³ Congress first mandated NAEP assessments as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and NCES conducted the first assessment in 1969. The law requires NAEP assessments in reading and mathematics to be conducted at least every two (2) years for fourth grade, eighth grade, and twelfth grade, with national and state-level results publicly reported. The data can be further analyzed by groupings, including gender, race/ethnicity, and economic status.⁴

State Law:

In Maryland, the Ready to Read Act was passed in 2019 and requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to screen all incoming kindergartners three (3) times a year to determine possible reading difficulties.⁵

According to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.03.08, the Ready to Read Act was expanded to require screening for first-, second-, and third-grade students who may be at risk for reading difficulties.⁶ It also requires provisions for supplemental reading instruction for identified students and contains both an annual reporting requirement and an evaluation of the screening program.⁷

The Blueprint or Maryland’s Future, passed in 2021, outlines strategies for ensuring that all Maryland students are college and career-ready upon graduation, and initiatives related to the science of reading are required.⁸ All LEAs are required to complete a Blueprint Implementation Plan that specifies how the school system plans to have 100% of Pre-K through third grade staff trained in instructional practices related to the science of reading within the next few years, with subsequent years dedicated to maintaining that number and ensuring teachers new to the system or to the grade level receive training at their earliest opportunity.

² [The Nation's Report Card | NAEP](#)

³ [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\) | IES](#)

⁴ [National Assessment of Educational Progress: The Basics | Bipartisan Policy Center](#)

⁵ [Legislation - SB0734](#)

⁶ [Students with Reading Difficulties](#)

⁷ [Frequently Asked Questions Students Risk Reading Difficulties.pdf](#)

⁸ [Blueprint in Action - Blueprint](#)

COMAR also requires LEAs to provide professional development for school staff that focuses on “age-appropriate, evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative instruction or intervention for student mastery of foundational reading skills, including phonological and phonemic awareness and processing, phonics, and vocabulary to support development of decoding, spelling, fluency, and reading comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum.”⁹

Dr. Carey Wright, the current State Superintendent of Schools, previously served as the State Superintendent of Education in Mississippi from 2013 until 2023. During her time as the Mississippi state superintendent, Dr. Wright led the implementation of education reforms sometimes known as the “Mississippi miracle” that resulted in significant gains in English proficiency.¹⁰

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) contracted with the Maryland Initiative for Literacy & Equity (MILE) to evaluate literacy instruction in PGCPs between February 2024 and May 2024.¹¹ MILE is a partnership between the University of Maryland and Morgan State University, funded by the Grand Challenges Grants Program.¹² The evaluation was to have literacy experts work in groups of two (2) to conduct thorough reviews of the literacy plans of all 24 Maryland school districts. The literacy experts were to observe teaching and learning in schools and evaluate whether instruction is consistent with the principles of the Science of Reading, assess whether reading instruction is implemented consistently across a school district, and build schools’ capacity to offer high-quality literacy training.¹³ The evaluation found that there was “consistent implementation of structured literacy through programs like Really Great Reading in primary grades and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Benchmark Advance, Benchmark Phonics, and Word Study in intermediate grades. The curriculum includes scaffolds for multilingual learners and offers bilingual support. These programs exhibit strong performance when teachers implement the program with fidelity, consistency, and structure.”¹⁴ Focus groups reported that the curricula use wide-ranging, diverse, culturally relevant materials, and teachers were observed connecting curricula to topics relevant to students’ lived experiences.¹⁵ However, even though teachers had many materials and resources, they had limited training on how and when to use these resources. Additionally, some teachers reported being unclear about how to enact structured literacy practices and having little training on the “science of reading” and how the curriculum implements these practices.¹⁶

Relevant legislation from Other Jurisdictions:

Mississippi’s Literacy-Based Promotion Act of 2013, which focuses on early literacy and teacher development, is commonly cited as the reason behind the Mississippi miracle.¹⁷ In 2013, 21% of

⁹ [COMAR 13A.03.08 Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties](#)

¹⁰ [After Steering Mississippi’s Unlikely Learning Miracle, Carey Wright Steps Down – The 74](#)

¹¹ [Revised K-12 Prince Georges County Interim Report \(October\)](#)

¹² [What We Do — Maryland Initiative for Literacy & Equity](#)

¹³ [Revised K-12 Prince Georges County Interim Report \(October\)](#)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ [MS SB2347 | 2013 | Regular Session | LegiScan](#)

Mississippi fourth graders were proficient in reading. By 2017, 27% were reading proficiently, and by 2024, 32% were proficient in reading.¹⁸ The Literacy-Based Promotion Act includes teacher training in reading instruction methods like phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The law includes targeted support for struggling readers, such as providing reading coaches or individual reading plans.¹⁹ Additionally, students repeat the third grade if they fail to meet reading standards.²⁰ The state also aligned its test to NAEP.²¹ These changes have led to significant improvements in Mississippi student NAEP fourth and eighth grade literacy scores, which were previously the worst in the country, and have now improved too much closer to the national average. In 2016, the law was amended to include individual reading plans for students identified with a reading deficiency.²² Additionally, it required teacher candidates to pass a foundational reading test for certification to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read. Research suggests that states that adopt early reading policies like those adopted in Mississippi may expect some meaningful gains, but those other states should not expect improvements on quite the same scale as Mississippi, as they need to make up less ground.²³

Resource Personnel:

- Ramon Gonzalez, Legislative Officer
- Tiffany Hannon, Chief of Staff

Discussion/Policy Analysis:

CR-088-2025 would establish a literacy commission to address both the disparities in literacy between different populations within the County and the disparities in literacy between the County and neighboring jurisdictions. These disparities exacerbate structural inequality and help perpetuate the cycle of historically disenfranchised groups being shut out of higher-paying jobs.

According to a 2021 study from the Institute of Education Sciences, nearly 43 million U.S. adults lack sufficient English literacy skills to succeed in the workforce.²⁴ The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) helps adults earn a high school equivalency and acquire a level of literacy that would enable them to achieve economic success.²⁵ Federally funded adult education serves three types of adult learners: adults needing basic literacy education, which supports learners with skills below the ninth-grade level, adults needing secondary education, and adults needing instruction in English as a second language. Nationally, almost half of all adults that lack

¹⁸ [The Nation's Report Card: 2024 Reading Snapshot Report for Mississippi Grade 4](#)

¹⁹ [MS SB2347 | 2013 | Regular Session | LegiScan](#)

²⁰ [Literacy-Based Promotion Act – Literacy](#)

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ [Mississippi Students Surged in Reading Over the Last Decade. Here's How Schools Got Them There](#)

²⁴ [Adult Education Strategies: Identifying and Building Evidence of Effectiveness](#)

²⁵ [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act | U.S. Department of Labor](#)

English literacy skills fall into the English as a second language category, with another 40% in the basic literacy education category.²⁶

Early reading is a foundational skill that leads to general academic success, helps to ensure that those graduating from high school are prepared for college, and makes adults less likely to fall into poverty, according to a study from the Annie E Casey Foundation.²⁷ If a child is unable to read at an appropriate level at the end of third grade, their risk of falling behind academically grows significantly, compared to their peers.²⁸ Research shows that almost nine (9) out of ten (10) of those who did not complete high school were struggling readers in third grade. Students who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are four (4) times more likely to drop out of high school.²⁹

According to the results of the 2024 NAEP, fourth grade reading scores continue to decline from where they were in 2019, itself a decline from 2017.³⁰ While there was no significant change in the reading scores of Maryland's fourth graders from 2022 to 2024, state reading scores nonetheless declined from 2019 to 2024 by about five (5) points.³¹ The decline is even more pronounced in eighth grade reading scores, which declined by about seven (7) points over the same time period. These declines are consistent with national trends.³² The NAEP recorded that 57% of Black fourth graders were reading at the NAEP basic level in 2017, whereas in 2024, the percentage had declined to 46%.^{33 34} Similarly, the percentage of Hispanic fourth graders reading at the NAEP basic level declined from 53% to 41% between 2017 and 2024.³⁵ All racial or ethnic groups in the state saw declines between 2017 and 2024, but the declines among Black and Hispanic students were the most significant.

PGCPS recognizes the need for improvement in explicit writing instruction and foundational reading skills to help struggling readers. MSDE's final report on literacy instruction in PGCPS found that, to enhance equity in supporting struggling readers, it is essential to establish a clear, district-wide, multi-tiered system of support and provide comprehensive training for all educators.³⁶ A centralized platform to aggregate data from assessment tools will improve consistency in addressing student needs. Furthermore, additional training for teachers on utilizing this data and in structured literacy is necessary to effectively leverage these resources. Other recommendations included establishing school-based reading specialists to integrate coaching into daily practice, which would promote ongoing and equitable professional learning throughout PGCPS. While schools promote collaborative planning through school-based meetings and professional development tools, including co-teaching, demonstration lessons, and co-planning for

²⁶ [Adult Education Strategies: Identifying and Building Evidence of Effectiveness](#)

²⁷ [Early Warning_r13.indd](#)

²⁸ [Layout 1](#)

²⁹ [Reading by Third Grade - The Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

³⁰ [2024 NAEP Mathematics and Reading, Grades 4 and 8 – Infographic.](#)

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ [The Nation's Report Card: 2017 Reading State Snapshot](#)

³⁴ [The Nation's Report Card: 2024 Reading Snapshot Report for Maryland Grade 4](#)

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ [Revised K-12 Prince Georges County Interim Report \(October\)](#)

reading teachers, these activities happen inconsistently between schools. Reading specialists also report being pulled in various directions, which may limit their impact. Observations revealed an overemphasis on word recognition rather than language comprehension in primary grades and difficulties with the intermediate phonics program for struggling readers.³⁷

As was previously stated, Mississippi's Literacy-Based Promotion Act is commonly cited as the reason for the Mississippi miracle. Throughout the country, most educational initiatives, such as literacy, are set by the state government. If the County, through the Literacy Commission, were to be the first LEA in Maryland to implement legislation patterned on the Mississippi model, it is reasonable to anticipate that the County would begin to see improvements in literacy among younger students within two years of implementation of such a proposal. CR-088-2025 goes further than the Literacy-Based Promotion Act in addressing disparities among adult populations as well, using resources, programming and workforce development strategies provided by PGCMLS and Employ Prince George's. However, there have been relatively few studies on the best methods of improving adult literacy. Therefore, any successful program to improve adult literacy may be an important innovation in that space.

Fiscal Impact:

- *Direct Impact*

Adoption of CR-088-2025 is not likely to have any direct fiscal impact.

- *Indirect Impact*

Adoption of CR-088-2025 is not likely to have any indirect fiscal impact.

- *Appropriated in the Current Fiscal Year Budget*

No.

Effective Date of Proposed Legislation:

The proposed Resolution shall be effective upon its adoption.

If you require additional information or have questions about this fiscal impact statement, please contact me by email.

³⁷ Ibid