

WHEREAS, There is solid scientific evidence for the effectiveness of the Reach Out and Read Program, developed in the Department of Pediatrics of the Boston City Hospital; and

WHEREAS, The Program is based on pediatricians prescribing reading at each well child visit and following up with a gift of the child's very own book; and

WHEREAS, The Program also involves reading by volunteers in the waiting room; and

WHEREAS, The Program targets children who are not likely to own a book; and

WHEREAS, The Program trains pediatricians and other child health care providers to promote literacy to all of their patients; and

WHEREAS, National book publishers participate in the Program and sell books to clinics and pediatric offices at very low prices; and

WHEREAS, The Annie E. Casey Foundation funded the Program in 12 primary care clinics in Baltimore City in 1997, but additional funding is needed to support the Program in those clinics; and

WHEREAS, Maryland's pediatricians are seeking training and support for the Program; and

WHEREAS, Maryland's library systems promote a program to give a library card to very young children, and this program is easily incorporated in the Program; and

WHEREAS, The Program could easily grow with corporate sponsorship, allowing Maryland businesses to invest in early literacy with donations of books; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article - Education

5-213.

(A) THE STATE BOARD SHALL DISTRIBUTE GRANTS EACH YEAR TO ORGANIZATIONS THAT:

(1) PROMOTE LITERACY AT AN EARLY AGE DURING WELL CHILD VISITS IN A HEALTH CARE SETTING; AND

(2) SOLICIT THE CORPORATE COMMUNITY FOR FUNDING FOR PROMOTING LITERACY AT AN EARLY AGE.

(B) AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS AWARDED A GRANT BY THE STATE BOARD UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL USE THE GRANT TO:

(1) PURCHASE BOOKS TO BE DISTRIBUTED AT WELL CHILD VISITS IN THE HEALTH CARE SETTING; AND