



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Steve Honig
The Honig Company, LLC
818-986-4300
press@honigllc.com

**FUNDING FOR CHILDREN’S LITERACY IN BALTIMORE HITS \$2 MILLION
AS RAISING A READER PROGRAM TO REACH 75 PERCENT
OF CITY’S PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN BY 2016**

**Literacy program being implemented in Baltimore City Public Schools and Head Start;
summer reading pilot program to launch in July**

BALTIMORE, June 16, 2015 – Despite the fact that budget cuts continue to challenge the City of Baltimore, the issue of children’s literacy is front-and-center with \$2 million in outside funding being brought into the city through Raising A Reader, a nonprofit organization that provides resources and programs that help families develop, practice and maintain literacy habits that are critical for a child’s success in school and in life.

According to the most recent Maryland School Assessment, 34.5 percent of third graders in Baltimore are reading below grade level, which is double the state average. One in six Baltimore children who are not reading proficiently in third grade will not graduate from high school on time, which is four times greater than that for proficient readers.

In response to this urgent need, Raising A Reader was first introduced into Baltimore in 2011, and has since expanded to include almost 100 public schools and 50 Head Start locations throughout the city. By the end of 2016, an estimated 75 percent of all pre-K and kindergarten children in Baltimore will be participating in the program. During the upcoming school year more than 12,000 Baltimore children will be enrolled, taking home 37,000 books every week as part of the program. By the end of 2016, Raising A Reader will have reached an estimated 42,000 children and their families throughout Baltimore.

“Raising A Reader is having a tremendous impact on children’s literacy in Baltimore and strengthening parent and child interactions throughout all of the city’s Head Start classrooms,” said Shannon Burroughs-Campbell, executive director of Baltimore City Head Start in the Mayor’s Office of Human Services. “Thousands of local children and their families are getting access to high quality books and materials and, as a result, raising the collective literacy bar in the city.”

- more -

In an effort to keep children on track and help prevent summer learning loss, Raising A Reader's funding partner The Abell Foundation is providing support for a pilot summer reading program that will start in July and run for six weeks. Approximately 700 elementary school children throughout the city will participate in the pilot program that will provide both digital and print materials to maintain a regular reading routine during the summer.

"It is critical the educational needs of children remain a top priority at this difficult time." said Gabrielle Miller, Ed.D., president and CEO of Raising A Reader. "We are committed to the families of Baltimore and will continue to do everything we can to support them and help children build the literacy skills essential for lifelong success. We are able to do this, in large part, thanks to the vision and commitment of our funders."

The majority of the funding for the program, which totals \$2 million to-date, has been secured by Raising A Reader from private foundations and federal grants, enabling the program to be implemented at almost no cost to the city or school system. Local major donors include The Abell Foundation, The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, The Wright Family Foundation, The T. Rowe Price Foundation and The Thalheimer Foundation with additional support from Target and Capital One. The program is also now receiving state and federal funding through the Maryland State Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education. This funding will support significant expansion in Baltimore as well as seven counties in Maryland.

Raising A Reader is a 501c3 charitable organization dedicated to helping families develop, practice and maintain literacy habits for children ages 0-8 that are critical for a child's success in school and in life. The program is evidence-based, with more than 23 independent evaluations showing that Raising A Reader significantly improves language and literacy skills, cognitive development, communication and comprehension skills, school readiness and social competence. Raising A Reader is implemented through a network of community partners that comprise more than 2,500 locations across the country including public school systems, libraries, afterschool programs, community agencies and other organizations both public and private. Headquartered in Redwood City, California, Raising A Reader was founded in 1999 and has served more than 1.25 million families nationwide. More information is available at RaisingAReader.org, @RARnational (Twitter) and [RaisingAReaderNational](https://www.facebook.com/RaisingAReaderNational) (Facebook).

#