

CITY OF BALTIMORE

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Olivia D. Farrow, Esq., R.S.,
Interim Commissioner
1001 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT: Brian Schleiter

PHONE: 443-386-3113

Mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

Congressman John Sarbanes, Health Officials Discuss Early Literacy Education, Pediatric Primary Care At Reach Out and Read Event

BALTIMORE, MD (August 5, 2009) – Congressman John Sarbanes today met with Interim Commissioner Farrow and participated in the Reach Out and Read program, which promotes early literacy by giving new books to at-risk children and advice to parents in a clinical setting.

Reach Out and Read trains doctors and nurses to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud and to give books to children at pediatric checkups from 6 months to 5 years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty. By building on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers, Reach Out and Read helps families and communities encourage early literacy skills so children enter school prepared for success in reading.

Interim Commissioner Farrow welcomed Congressman Sarbanes to the Baltimore Medical System at the Belair/Edison location for a discussion of the successful reading program. Reach Out and Read is up and running in 14 doctor's offices and clinical sites in the 3rd Congressional District that Congressman Sarbanes serves. More than 9,000 children have participated.

"I have always enjoyed reading with my own children and know how rewarding it can be for both the parent and the child," said Congressman Sarbanes. "When children begin reading at an early age, it expands their vocabulary and fosters a love of reading that can last a lifetime."

Following introductions to Baltimore Medical Systems staff and Interim Commissioner Farrow, Congressman Sarbanes read to a dozen children before handing out books for them to take home and keep. He then toured the Baltimore Medical System facility and was briefed on the success of the reading program by staff.

"The Reach out and Read program is a critical part of the city Health Department's outreach to improve the minds of our youngest residents," stated Mayor Sheila Dixon. "I want to personally thank Rep. Sarbanes for taking time out of his busy schedule to read to the kids. He has always been a tireless and dedicated advocate on their behalf on Capitol Hill."

“Congressman Sarbanes has been a strong advocate for the Reach Out and Read program. Through the appropriations process, he has provided great public support for the program as well, and Baltimore City students are better for it.”

For more information about Reach Out and Read and a list of participating centers in Baltimore, visit www.baltimorehealth.org/ror.html.

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