

Memorandum

To: Sen. Arnie Roblan, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Student Success
Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Student Success
Members of the Joint Committee on Student Success

From: Carly Hood-Ronick MPA, MPH
OPCA Senior Manager, Health Equity

Date: April 22, 2019

Re: Support for HB 3427 with -1 Amendment – Reach out and Read Program

There is a wealth of research and national consensus that assessing and addressing the **social determinants of health** (SDH) is key to improving both individual and population health outcomes. The Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA) is a non-profit organization, with a mission to support Oregon's 32 community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, in leading the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all. Community health centers deliver integrated primary care, including dental and behavioral health services, to over **433,000 Oregonians annually**. Health Centers – founded on the social justice principles in the 1960s – provide holistic, community health support by considering the aspects of a patient's life beyond the fraction of the time they are in a clinic or hospital setting.

In Oregon, nearly **75% of patients seen in a health center setting are at or below the poverty line**, and almost **60% are on Medicaid**. The patients seen have complex medical as well as social needs. For communities experiencing poverty, there are a wealth of reasons upstream interventions are critical. One of the most **cost efficient, evidence-based, and high impact early learning and brain development programs is Reach Out and Read (ROR)**. By targeting children from birth to age four, this program promotes parent-child attachment, brain development, early literacy, and school readiness by integrating children's books and parent coaching on reading aloud into clinical visits (150,000 a year).

This program has been minimally funded in the Dept. of Education budget for several years; it is now at \$50,000 for the biennium. With additional funding to support the volunteer medical providers and grow the program's capacity (especially in rural Oregon), **ROR can be a huge contributor to achieving the aims of the 2019 - 2023 Oregon Early Learning Council System Plan**. Increasing ROR's state budget funding to \$150,000 a year would make a significant difference in child readiness for kindergarten.

I hope you will agree that a **physician-led early learning program** serving more than **90,000 Oregon kids** at less than \$2.00 a year per child (including free books!) is a fantastic investment in Oregon's future.

OPCA thanks you for your work and dedication to student success. HB 3427 with the -1 amendment is a meaningful investment in early childhood and K-12 programs. Unfortunately, Reach Out and Read is not an allowable use of those funds. We ask that you further amend the bill to invest in Oregon's children through ROR.

OPCA respectfully urges you to support HB 3427 with the -1 amendment and hopes you will support increasing Reach Out and Read Oregon's state funding. Thank you for your support.