



OREGON

March 29, 2021

Dear Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

My name is Samira Godil, and I am the Executive Director of Reach Out and Read Oregon, an evidence-based, early learning program which helps integrate reading into pediatric and family medicine practices. As the only national literacy organization that operates within the medical system, we advise families with children ages 0-5 about the importance of reading and share books that serve as a catalyst for healthy childhood development. Reach Out and Read was able to continue to provide services during COVID-19 due to this unique access point and serve the families during a time when they needed it the most.

In FY 20 Reach Out and Read Oregon:

- **Provided 165,630 well-child-visits**
- **94,110 visits were covered by OHP**
- **Distributed 154,029 new books to the children and their families**
- **Operated out of 158 program sites**

We know that:

- **Before the age of 5, a child's brain makes one million new neural connections every second, with early experiences shaping brain architecture.**
- **Children ages 0-5 are the most racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse Oregonians, and they are the group of Oregonians most likely to live in poverty.**

With the gaps in healthcare, early literacy, and education resources that rural, low-income and BIPOC families experience, we have prioritized program expansion into clinics who serve these specific communities. **We believe it is part of our mission to ensure that every child, especially those who are impacted by systemic racism and socioeconomic inequality, begins life with the tools and support necessary to position them for lifelong success.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share the impact of Reach Out and Read Oregon on the **80,000 children** the program serves each year. Your support of SB 5513 and its inclusion of \$75,000 in Reach Out and Read Oregon funding is a commitment to the lifelong health and wellbeing of our state's children and families.

Sincerely,

Samira Godil
Executive Director, Reach Out and Read Oregon