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Dear Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

On behalf of myself I would like to share the significant impact that Reach Out and Read Oregon has made in the lives of the children and families that the program serves within my clinic.

As a pediatric resident I participated in Reach Out and Read at Oregon Health and Science University. I saw how excited the kids were when we walked in and handed them a book. I loved listening to the parents talk about how they had incorporated reading as a family at bedtime and I knew the literature. Reading aloud works. I wanted to bring this back to my tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. I wanted my tribal youth to have better vocabulary, be more kindergarten ready, and score higher on their third grade reading tests, because we know this predicts high school drop-out rates. In 2014 I helped bring ROR to my tribal clinic. I am proud to say the program has been at the tribe for 7 years now and I get to be provider handing books out to the children and educating families on the importance of reading aloud. So often, families tell me these are the only books in their house and how special it is to read every night with their children.

By investing in the growth and sustainability of Reach Out and Read Oregon, you are investing in the lifelong health and wellbeing of not only the children I provide care for but also of children across the state. Thank you for this opportunity to share the impact of Reach Out and Read Oregon on my patients, their caregivers, and families, and I urge you to support the program through funding under the Department of Education budget.

Kind Regards,

Allison Empey, MD  
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics