

Ryan Hassan
Oregon Pediatrics

3/30/21

Dear Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

On behalf of myself and the staff at Oregon Pediatrics, 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 our clinic.

Our clinic has been partnering with Reach Out and Read Oregon since 2019, and it has greatly improved the quality of care we provide to our patients. Even the basic act of just providing a family with a book to read to their child at each of their well child visits with their pediatrician is immeasurably beneficial. Many families we serve have limited access to books, and for some, the books we provide are the only books in their homes. When families have more books in the home, they are more likely to read to and with their children, which is one of the most important determinants of early child development, early relational health, and early literacy, all of which have been shown to drastically impact long term health and success.

But the Reach Out and Read Oregon program is about more than just giving books to families. When I give books to my patients, it allows me to immediately create or reinforce my positive relationship with the child and their parents. It helps divert a child's attention from the fear or anxiety they may have about being in the clinic, or from the screen their parent may have put in front of them to keep them calm. The book helps me engage with a child directly and get an immediate sense for their level of development, while simultaneously role modeling for parents the ways that they can support their child's development, and gives them a tangible tool to do so. Parents who see me talk with their child and point to pictures or words in the book, and encourage them as they learn to turn the pages, or to count, or to describe pictures, or to sound out the words, get to see first hand how to do those things themselves. Many families I work with didn't realize the immense positive impact that reading can have on their child's development until I was able to show them firsthand during a well visit with a Reach Out and Read book.

The Reach Out and Read program gives pediatricians and families the tools we need to help children reach their highest potential. It increases literacy, helps children be prepared for school, and promotes positive relationships between parents and their children. This directly translates to healthier, more successful children, who become healthier, happier adults. This means lower medical costs, lower rates of school failure and drop out, and lower rates of unemployment in adulthood. Investing in early child health through Reach Out and Read Oregon is one of the smartest, most cost-effective, and impactful investment that we can make, and I urge you to support the program through funding under the Department of Education budget.

Kind Regards,

Ryan Hassan MD MPH