

Submitter: Larry Horton

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2872

Good Day Representatives,

My name is Larry Horton, I am a citizen from Sweet Home. I am contacting you regarding HB 2872 scheduled for a hearing on March 1. This bill directs the Department of Early Learning and Care to develop, implement and administer the Oregon Imagination Library Project to improve reading proficiency and thus improve high school graduation rates. The program provides enrolled children with one quality, age-appropriate book per month from birth to age five or when the child enters kindergarten.

I am the retired superintendent of schools in Sweet Home, Oregon. I was an educator for 43 years. During my career I have seen very few programs that have impacted early literacy as much as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program. Our four Linn County Rotary Clubs (Albany, Greater Albany, Lebanon and Sweet Home) started the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program eight years ago in Linn County. The Albany School District and the Sweet Home School District worked with our Linn County Rotary Clubs to compare entering reading literacy scores of the enrolled students versus the non-enrolled students on the state's kindergarten readiness tests. Comparisons were done three times prior to COVID. On all three comparisons, the Imagination Library enrollees outscored the non-participants by 35% and more on the reading readiness sections of the test. The Dolly Foundation has conducted similar comparisons in numerous counties throughout the states with similar findings.

This program not only shows great promise for early literacy success, it does an excellent job of strengthening the child-parent-family bonds. Parents start reading to and with their children as soon as they are born. The enrolled children get a new, age-appropriate quality book every month in the mail. The books are addressed to the children, so they are so very excited when "Their book" arrives each month. Parents are then encouraged to read with and to their children on a regular basis. Each book comes with questions and activities at the end of the story. The kids and parents go through comprehension questions and activities together. Consistent,

quality time is shared between parents and their children. This time spent reading together on a regular basis creates strong family bonds and strong readers for a lifetime.

Our Rotary Clubs currently support approximately 3,000 children each year. There could and should be far more students enrolled in this program. Currently, thirteen states fully fund this fantastic program, and all are extremely satisfied with their investment. With statewide support, all Oregonian children ages birth to five could be benefiting from the Imagination Library.

I am asking on behalf of all Oregonian families with children ages birth to five, that this House Bill 2872 move forward with bipartisan support. This program will make a positive difference for all participating children. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (541) 619-2683 or email me at <drlarry_horton@yahoo.com>. Thank you so very much for all that you are doing for our Oregonian citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,

Larry Horton

SH # 55 Retired Superintendent

SH Rotary Club Youth Advocate