

To: Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Scharf and Nguyen, and members of the House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

From: Hilly Alexander, Wilsonville, Oregon

I am writing in support of HB 2872 which directs the Department of Early Learning and Care to develop, implement and administer Oregon Imagination Library Project to improve reading proficiency and high school graduation rates by providing enrolled children with one age-appropriate book per child each month.

The Oregon Imagination Library Project will make Dolly Parton's Imagination Library available statewide. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails a high quality age-appropriate book once a month to children from birth until their fifth birthday at no cost to the parents. A team of experts meets annually to select the books for each age group. Currently, two of the twelve books children receive each year are in both Spanish and English. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library encourages families to read together and builds routines around reading. The books include reading tips that are tailored to each book. Children who participate in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library are better prepared when they start kindergarten and tend to have higher test scores in third grade. Children from all socio-economic situations receive the same book and that helps to create community once they reach kindergarten.

Local affiliates of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library are responsible for enrolling eligible children and raising the money to pay for books and postage. The Wilsonville Imagination Library was started eleven years ago in close collaboration with the Wilsonville Public Library to support early literacy. Children get excited when their book arrives in the mail and want to read it right away.

Wilsonville Mom Lauren Nakamura tells us: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library "has allowed us to build our own library at home. We receive a new book every month and it has now made checking the mail so exciting! Reading has been so impactful for Connor and his vocabulary has just blossomed from books. He just turned 2 years old, and he is already reading some of his favorite books to us! Not only does reading help with their development, but it also makes for the most special memories one on one. Books are part of our every day, and we are so grateful for this program in our community. Being able to receive a new book each month until he is 5 is such an incredible way to keep books exciting and a part of our routines."

Another Mom recently told me about her experience with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. One of her kids has already graduated from the program and her younger daughter is enrolled. She is so impressed with the quality of the books. Then she added that receiving the books has made a huge difference in her single-income family. They would not have been able to afford all the books.

We are fortunate that all children younger than five years old in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District are eligible to participate in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. We are always disappointed when we have to turn away children from neighboring communities. The statewide Oregon Imagination Library

Project will lower the cost barrier for starting a local Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. This will allow more Oregon children to benefit from a proven early literacy program.

The Directors of the Wilsonville Public Library Foundation which funds Wilsonville Imagination Library strongly support House Bill 2872. We urge all members of the Committee to pass HB 2872.

Thank you!