

Submitter: Reed Davaz McGowan

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2872

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

My name is Reed Davaz McGowan and I am writing in support of HB 2872. I live in Eugene with my 6 and a half year old who is a graduate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. I have included a picture of him receiving his first book with a huge smile. This program has been incredibly important to my family and I've seen the impact on children across Lane County through my work with Eugene Public Library Foundation.

While I grew up in Oregon, we moved away and moved back right before the pandemic began. That meant that our books and toys were in storage for months. For us, getting the books in the mail helped us access the joy and resources that the Imagination Library brings. It created excitement when we checked the mail and my son's name was on the label. It was a book just for him that came each and every month to our home.

We would stop and read together for 15 minutes or so right then, having the critical time that American Academy of Pediatrics finds to boost vocabulary and reading skills before elementary school. Reading and rereading the books together helped at different stages with the intentional scaffolding of the books the Dollywood Foundation's Blue Ribbon Book Committee selects based on early childhood development. He is in the first grade and reading far above grade level, in part due to this fantastic early literacy program. *I have included the books' alignment with the child development chart at the end of this letter too.*

Beyond my family, this program has widespread impact in communities across Oregon and across the country. Because it is a cost effective early literacy program, it is able to be implemented and scaled across our state. I have worked closely with many Imagination Library affiliates that urgently need this state level support to reach all children in their communities.

I wanted to share a couple of key pieces of research to support the importance of the Imagination Library being accessible for all children in Oregon until their 5th birthday:

- Imagination Library's reach to children in rural areas and book deserts is one of the ways that children can have regular access to books by having age-appropriate books mailed directly to their homes. There is more information on the research available around this and other benefits of Imagination Library on the extensive research listings available through Imagination Library: <https://imaginationlibrary.com/news-resources/research/>.
- Research published in the Journal of Health Economics in 2022 shared that when all children have had access to free lunch, a larger number of those students who qualify for

free meals access free lunch because the stigma is reduced after universal access. Similarly, access to free books for all children under 5 in Oregon will increase access for children who need books in their homes and also create connection and a shared experience for children.

- In a scientific study in which children participated in a combination of Reach out and Read and Imagination Library, children significantly improved performance on the kindergarten readiness assessment over three years:
  - Both the ROR and DPIL have evidence of effectiveness in promoting literacy in preschoolers. With this early study, we suggest that when combined and sustained, these two programs have the potential for effectively supporting the development of preliteracy skills of large populations of at-risk children, improving kindergarten readiness, and, ultimately, success in school and life. [Pediatrics \(2021\) 147 \(6\)](#)

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. Please support HB 2872 so all children in Oregon have a strong start to literacy development.

In community,



Reed Davaz McGowan  
Eugene



# Age in Months

