

Submitter: Jim Scheppke  
On Behalf Of: Marion and Polk Early Learning Hub  
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2811

Dear Chair Hartman and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to urge your support of HB 2811 to establish the Dolly Parton Imagination Library as a project of the Department of Early Learning and Care.

I was privileged to serve as the State Librarian of Oregon for two decades (1991-2011) and in that time did everything I could to have our public libraries prioritize their work with preschool children and their families to instill the love of reading and learning. In my retirement I have continued that work as a volunteer with the Marion and Polk Early Learning Hub to bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program to all of Salem where I live, and to all of Marion and Polk Counties.

We began to raise funds in 2023 and in the summer of that year we were able to begin to sign up children for the program in a few zip codes in Salem, Keizer and Falls City. Today we have succeeded with our fundraising to have all of Marion and Polk Counties in the program. This has been made possible by the matching funds that the Oregon Legislature approved in 2024. We have aggressively worked with libraries, child care providers, health care providers and others to sign up children to receive free books. As of the end of December over 7,000 children are participating in the program! That's about a third of the 21,520 children we estimate who are eligible.

Now we need passage of HB 2811 to put our program into law and to enable continued matching funds from the State as we grow the program statewide.

I thank Governor Kotek for her strong support of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and I thank the Legislature for your support of matching funds that enable local programs like ours to raise the funding necessary to sign up as many children as possible. Our goal is to have every eligible child in Marion and Polk Counties receiving a book every month from Dolly!

Please support HB 2811.

Jim Scheppke  
Salem