



January 28, 2025

House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2811 and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Oregon Program. As the Program Director for Imagination Library at the Yamhill Enrichment Society (YES), a non-profit that has proudly partnered with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library since October 2013, I can speak firsthand to the program's impact. Over the past 12 years, we've mailed more than 290,000 books, graduated 6,338 children, and consistently maintained an enrollment of about 2,500 children.

Yamhill County is a rural county with approximately 52% of households below the ALICE line and 15% of families experiencing child poverty (Oregon By The Numbers 2024). Many of our local families don't have the means to access quality reading material for their children. Imagination Library plays a pivotal role in bridging that gap. An online survey conducted in October 2024 of parents and caregivers enrolled in the Imagination Library in Yamhill County revealed some exciting findings:

- Before receiving books from the Imagination Library, **55% of Yamhill County families owned less than twenty children's books in the home.**
- Since receiving Imagination Library books, **63% read with their child more than once a day and 24% read with their child once a day.**
- Since receiving Imagination Library books, **70% of parents and caregivers report that their child asks to be read to more often.**
- 78% of parents report that receiving books from the Imagination Library has made their child more interested in books and reading
- **89% of parents believe participation in Imagination Library is helping their child better prepare for kindergarten**



A Yamhill County parent shared the positive impact the program has on her family:

"We have 3 toddlers who LOVE receiving books from Imagination Library! Anytime I see the monthly books in the mailbox, I leave them there and encourage the kids to check the mail that day. They're always so excited to get their own mail and for it to be a fun, age-appropriate book. As soon as they pull the book out of the mailbox, we race in the house, snuggle up, and read together. Then, those books go on our shelf to be enjoyed over and over again. Some books that we've received have been very helpful to reread as they address timely situations for our family. For example, we read "The Big Slide" on repeat the week leading up to slide day at swim lessons. It helped my 3-year-old work up the courage to go down the big slide at the pool!"

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a critical program to the health and well being of our children, families and community. Thank you for your support!

Best –

Sarah Lessen
Imagination Library Program Director
Yamhill Enrichment Society - YES