

Hello Chair Annessa Hartman, Vice Chairs Anna Scharf and Hoa Nguyen, and members of the House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

For the record: my name is Hilly Alexander, I am from Wilsonville, Oregon

I am here in support of HB 2811 which establishes Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Oregon Program to provide a free book each month to eligible children, encourage children to develop a love of reading and learning and improve third-grade reading proficiency and high school graduation rates. Directs the Department of Early Learning and Care to implement the program. Establishes the Oregon Imagination Library Account within the Department of Early Learning and Care Fund for purposes of funding the program (50% state match).

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.

Dr. John Hutton, pediatrician, Cincinnati, Ohio, highlights what makes this program so effective:

Books are mailed to the child every month. This gift makes books exciting and encourages parents to read with their babies and toddlers. Dr. Hutton states that books are highly effective for early learning. Kids learn how to open books, recognize letters, develop vocabulary.

More than 4,300 children in Wilsonville have received at least one book in the last 13 years. Here is what I hear from parents all the time: "we love getting the books", my child "knows there will be a book in the mailbox", my child says "read it to me now" on the way back from the mailbox, "we wouldn't have been able to afford all the books".

The Directors of the Wilsonville Public Library Foundation which funds Wilsonville Imagination Library strongly support House Bill 2811. We want all little children in Oregon to have high-quality books. We urge all members of the Committee to pass HB 2811.

Thank you!