

March 18, 2013

Dear Co-Chair Smith & Members of the Committee,

My name is Esther Moberg and I am from the Seaside Public Library. I am giving this testimony regarding the state of Oregon's Ready to Read Grant.

I have had experience for the past 6 years, since January 2007 with the Ready to Read Grant and can testify to its critical importance for small libraries in the state of Oregon. I started as Children's librarian in 2007 with the Creswell Library. The previous year (before they used the Ready to Read Grant for summer reading), the library had 50 children signed up for summer reading. At my first summer reading event, we had 150 children show up. Over the next six years the program grew to a peak of 385 children signed up for the summer reading program with over 100 of those children actively participating in the summer reading program. Some of those children read between 50 to 100 hours individually each summer. One family in Creswell was so happy with being able to do summer reading that at the end of summer reading they had a floral bouquet delivered to the library with their thanks to all the staff and volunteers of the library. Our summer reading program had the important piece of reaching out to all the children in the schools. Each year I would present a preview of the program to all the children in the local schools, (600+ kids) each spring by visiting every single classroom. This helped reach children who had never been in the library before and didn't even know it was there for them to use. Working with the local teachers and schools we were able to coordinate school visits to the library to get the children signed up for both library cards and summer reading. I have also had experience volunteering as the 2010 summer reading coordinator for the state. This meant I worked directly with the state library services coordinator (Katie Anderson) to get summer reading manuals to each library in Oregon. Because of this relationship working with all the libraries across the state I got the experience first hand of hearing from other small libraries. One comment I often heard was that the Ready to Read grant was the ONLY children's program money they received for the entire year. When I worked in Creswell, my budget for the year for children's programs was \$300. Obviously, receiving \$1,000 for the summer made a huge impact on the kind of services and programs we could put on for the summer. Trust me, all of the tiny libraries stretch this money every single way imaginable to give the best services and programs for their community. We use everything from egg crates for crafts to local business sponsors to create programs that often cost less than one dollar per child but come across as impressively awesome programs to the children and their parents. We can measure success of our summer programs in many ways. One way is through growth in programs at our library. I have kept statistics on return users each summer, new library cards, and total number of hours read, as well as total children signed up. It may be helpful to team up with local schools or have an independent researcher create a study tracking some sample children in a blind test of those who do or do not use summer reading programs and see the difference between their reading comprehension scores through the years especially right after summer.

For the past two years we changed the focus from the prizes for the children to focusing on giving back to the community. The first year we partnered with Heifer International and had local sponsors give one penny for every hour read in the summer program. The children were able to work toward raising money for goats, ducks, bees, and other animals that would help children in third world countries have the money they needed to put food on the table and go to school. Last year we partnered with the local school community garden and had sponsors again match reading hours to help give back to the garden. This garden is important because teachers have been using it as a teaching aid for children including a geography garden with plants from around the world, and teaching environmental & conservation issues. With the over 1500 hours read by the children we were able to raise over \$500 for the garden. Partnering with schools is very important since the whole point of the Ready to Read grant is to sustain what is taught in schools throughout the summer months. We have to provide the encouragement and support for schools – they can't do it alone.

At my current job at the Seaside Library, last year the library partnered with the local school teachers to

work with low reader 3rd graders. They created what they called “animal camp” and the teachers helped throughout the summer to build library summer reading programs into the children's daily routine. This partnership with teachers fostered interaction between the children, the library, and schoolteachers, as well as helping to bolster the children's reading skills at a time when typically children's reading skills decline(during the summer)instead of improve. Two quotes from children who participated in last year's animal camp: “I liked reading because we could read fast and we got better,” “Reading was wonderful and writing reports. It was fun to read our reports to everyone.”

One thing I was unable to speak to in my verbal testimony today because of the time limits was regarding teen summer reading programming which is currently not supported by the Ready to Read grant. I feel teen summer reading programs are extremely important especially in rural areas of Oregon. Often this is the only free entertainment of any value in the entire town or area. But more than entertainment, the educational piece of supporting children all the way through to adulthood sets the standard high for showing the state of Oregon truly cares and invests in the future success of its children.

Finally, I believe that the level of support that the Oregon State Library provides, especially to those of us in children's services, is necessary and not expendable. For small libraries in the state, Katie Anderson is the only person to turn to when there is a question or need. The continuity and high level of service state library staff provide is invaluable. MaryKay Dahlgren is available to answer questions regardless of the size of the library. The state level staff have beyond a doubt the kind of excellence in support local libraries need. We trust the state library to help us on to our next levels of achieving excellence in providing children and adults in their ongoing needs of access to literacy and information.

Thank you,

Esther Moberg

Seaside Public Library