

Testimony on House Bill 4050
To the House Education Committee

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Chairperson Doherty and members of the committee:

I am here today representing the Oregon Library Association. We haven't taken an official position on HB 4050 yet, because we just saw it. However, I can say that we as librarians are huge advocates of summer learning programs, and would love to see even more children benefitting from them.

Libraries like mine have been providing summer reading programs for many years, not only to help children get ready to read by teaching early literacy skills, but to continue to build their reading skills when school is out. We believe that teaching early literacy skills and promoting reading skills are essential to successful learning in school.

It has been my privilege to serve as a Children's Librarian at the Newberg Public Library for the past sixteen years. Our busiest time of year, as it is for public libraries across the country, is the summer. Oregon libraries provide free, voluntary reading programs and expanded learning opportunities across the state. These activities continue to build reading and writing skills in youth all summer long. In 2015, 68,735 children and teens in Oregon completed a Summer Reading Program at their library.

Over the years, the focus of many public libraries has changed from one focused solely on the children coming into the library, to a broader outreach into the community the public library serves. Like many public libraries, we work with the schools, Headstart, and other community partners such as the free lunch program to encourage reading and writing throughout the summer. Using Ready to Read grant funds, as well as others, we are able to give every child who signs up for the Summer Reading Program a free new book. This year over 2,500 new books were given away.

Assuming the Legislature passes this bill and the Council is established, I would encourage the Council to build on what is already out there -- successful summer reading programs in public libraries. These programs receive state support through the Ready to Read program and there are many wonderful examples of cooperation with schools and other community organizations. The Oregon Library Association is ready to work with the Council to help expand summer learning for more children.