

April 13, 2017

Representative John Lively, Chair
Members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports
900 Court St, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Lively and Members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Ellen Stevenson. I serve as the Medical Director of Reach Out and Read Oregon, am a pediatrician at Doernbecher Children's Hospital and the Children's Community Clinic, and an associate professor at Oregon Health and Science University.

The experience of healthcare providers such as Allison and Prashanthi are supported by substantial research. Reading aloud helps strengthen parent-child interactions and builds the language, literacy, and social emotional skills that last throughout a lifetime.

The American Academy of Pediatrics formally recommends literacy promotion to be an essential component of pediatric care beginning at birth, highlighting Reach Out and Read as an effective intervention. For many low-income families, a well-child visit is the only consistent contact with the health or education systems before their child enters preschool or kindergarten.

Fifteen independent published studies prove Reach Out and Read's efficacy. Children served by Reach Out and Read test three to six months ahead of their peers in their language development and enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills. Parents served by the program are four times more likely to read aloud regularly with their children, and up to ten times more likely in families where English is not the primary language.

In Oregon over 1 in 5 children live in poverty and 50% of young children in poverty arrive at kindergarten without the literacy skills that they need to succeed. Many states, including Washington, Georgia, South Carolina and Colorado invest in Reach and Read at levels significantly higher than Oregon has to date. I respectfully request that your committee support the state's investment in this important program.

With your support of Reach Out and Read, we can spark a love of reading during the most critical window for brain development, increase school readiness, and open the doors of opportunity for more of Oregon's children.

Thank you for your time and attention to our state's earliest learners.

Sincerely,
Dr. Ellen Stevenson