

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,

For the record, my name is Maria Sleeman. I am the Program Director of Reach Out and Read in Oregon. I would like to thank you for the past state investment in Reach Out and Read. This investment has been and continues to be critical in ensuring children from birth through 5 years of age are ready for Kindergarten.

Reach Out and Read Oregon is an evidence-based program promoting early literacy through primary care, beginning in infancy. We partner with primary care providers, who volunteer their time to “prescribe books” and educate families about the importance of establishing early literacy skills. Parents receive guidance on the importance of reading aloud daily and children are given one new book per visit. By the time a child turns five, they'll have a small library made possible by Reach Out and Read.

Currently, we serve approximately 75,000 children and 112,000 parents and caregivers through 150,000 well-child visits. With a \$100,000 investment from the state, we would be able to continue to serve these children and families. We have 121 program sites and utilize nearly 1200 volunteer medical providers and staff. The state investment would also help us add the additional goal of increasing the number of children served by at least 5 percent annually.

ROR was available in Oregon for 11 years without a local coalition. In those 11 years, Oregon added an average of 3 sites per year, for a total of 33 sites. Five years ago we formed a statewide coalition and have added over 17 sites served per year, an increase of 267%. This is far above the National average and shows the need for and benefit of having a local coalition in the state.

We can talk about Reach Out and Read all day, but it is easiest if we show you an example of how the program works. We will now show a video before hearing from a clinic administrator and providers who can further elaborate on the need and impact of ROR.