

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 Prashanthi Kaveti and I am a Program Administrator at Willamette Family Medical Center (WFMC) here in Salem. Our clinic has been providing quality primary care services to low-income community members for over 21 years. WFMC has been a long standing advocate of Reach Out and Read (ROR). The ROR program has been a critical component of helping our patients address the impact of illiteracy on their social determinants of health.

This program is extremely well-received by both providers and families. Parents often express concerns and frustrations about access to the local library and books in general. We often hear that the book their child receives at the 6-month well-child visit is the first and only book families have in their home. These visits provide an opportunity for our providers to engage with parents about resources and services that can help supplement the child's overall health and well-being. Without ROR, many of these families would have no access to the literary resources crucial to a child's development. Thanks to the Reach Out and Read Coalition and the Marion County Early Learning Hub, WFMC has been able to provide patients with at least 10 new books to add to their home library before they graduate from the program.

The success of this program in our clinic has inspired us to implement the message of early literacy in our other departments. Our prenatal providers use the foundations of Reach Out and Read to encourage parents to start reading to their children as early as they can. Additionally, WFMC offers "gently used" books to siblings of patients so that everyone can go home with a book in hand. Funding this program would continue to help build a strong relationship between our providers and patients. Funding this program will improve the health, social and, emotional development of our youth. Funding this program will give underserved children the start they need to reach their full potential.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Prashanthi Kaveti