A-Engrossed
House Bill 2247
Ordered by the House March 19
Including House Amendments dated March 19

Introduced and printed pursuant to House Rule 12.00. Presession filed (at the request of House Interim Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports)

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor’s brief statement of the essential features of the measure.

[Directs] Establishes Oregon Imagination Library Project in Early Learning Division [to develop, implement and administer Oregon Imagination Library Project] to improve kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading proficiency [and high school graduation rates] by providing enrolled children with [age-appropriate] free book once each month from birth to age five. Prescribes methods by which division shall support project.

Establishes Oregon Imagination Library Account within Early Learning Division Fund for purposes of funding project.

 Declares emergency, effective [on passage] July 1, 2019.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to encouragement of reading in young children; and declaring an emergency.

Whereas Oregon ranks third worst in the country in high school graduation rates; and

Whereas learning to read by third grade is a key indicator for future high school completion, but less than half of Oregon’s third grade students meet proficiency benchmarks in reading; and

Whereas at kindergarten entry, 37 percent of Oregon children are unable to recognize a single letter and an even higher percentage cannot recognize a single letter sound; and

Whereas parents have the greatest impact on the lives of their children; and

Whereas according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the single most important activity an adult can engage in to prepare a child for a life of learning is to read frequently with the child, preferably every day; and

Whereas there is a direct correlation between the number of books in the home and future academic success; and

Whereas mailing books each month to preschool children has been shown to dramatically increase the percentage of families reading to their children and the frequency of parents reading to children; and

Whereas sending age-appropriate books to preschool children is the broadest and most cost-effective way to elevate early literacy benchmarks; and

Whereas preschool children enrolled in a program that sends a book to them each month score higher on kindergarten readiness assessments; now, therefore,

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. (1) As used in this section:

(a) “Local Imagination Library program” means a program that is provided to a community or to a county as part of the Oregon Imagination Library Project and that provides
free age-appropriate books each month to enrolled children from birth to age five.

(b) “Local Imagination Library program affiliate” means an entity that:

(A)(i) Is an organization exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; or

(ii) Is a school district; and

(B) Has entered into a contract with a national book gifting foundation to provide to every child enrolled in the program an age-appropriate book each month from birth to age five.

(2) The Oregon Imagination Library Project is established within the Early Learning Division for the purpose of improving kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading proficiency by providing free books to children who are enrolled in a local Imagination Library program each month from birth to age five.

(3) The division shall support the Oregon Imagination Library Project by:

(a) Entering into a partnership with the national book gifting foundation that has contracts with local Imagination Library program affiliates for the purpose of having the division pay 50 percent of the monthly contract cost.

(b) Assisting local Imagination Library programs:

(A) With the establishment of programs in communities or counties that are not served by a local Imagination Library program;

(B) In recruiting volunteers for the implementation and administration of the programs; and

(C) In enrolling children in the programs.

(4) The division may enter into a contract with a statewide organization that is exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code to raise moneys and to assist in the implementation of the project.

(5) The division shall distribute moneys for the project from the Oregon Imagination Library Account established under section 2 of this 2019 Act. Distributions shall be made as prescribed by rules adopted by the Early Learning Council.

(6) The division may create an advisory committee to make recommendations to the division on how best to develop, implement and administer the project in this state.

(7) The council, in consultation with the division, shall adopt rules to implement the provisions of this section.

SECTION 2. (1) The Oregon Imagination Library Account is established within the Early Learning Division Fund. Separate records shall be maintained for moneys in the account. Interest earned by the account shall be credited to the account.

(2) Moneys in the account are continuously appropriated to the Department of Education for use by the Early Learning Division for the Oregon Imagination Library Project described in section 1 of this 2019 Act.

SECTION 3. The Early Learning Division shall distribute funds from the Oregon Imagination Library Account established under section 2 of this 2019 Act for the Oregon Imagination Library Project described in section 1 of this 2019 Act as follows:

(1) Beginning January 1, 2020, for programs not described in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) Beginning June 1, 2021, for programs that:

(a) Are located in counties that have a population of less than 100,000; and

(b) Existed prior to July 1, 2018.
SECTION 4. In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropri-
ated to the Department of Education for use by the Early Learning Division, for the
biennium beginning July 1, 2019, out of the General Fund, the amount of $______, which shall
be deposited in the Oregon Imagination Library Account established under section 2 of this
2019 Act.

SECTION 5. This 2019 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public
peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2019 Act takes effect
July 1, 2019.