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Dear Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

On behalf of myself and the staff at Cascades East Family Practice I would like to share the significant impact that Reach Out and Read Oregon has made in the lives of the children and families that the program serves within our clinic.

We serve a largely Medicaid population here in Southern Oregon. Many of our families cannot afford books for their children. Receiving their Reach Out and Read books is the highlight of the wellness visits. Parents are thrilled to be building their child's home library. They are amazingly receptive to the idea of regular reading with their child to improve school readiness and future success. It's also a great approach to encouraging family bonding that doesn't occur over a screen. This program is so vital to our practice. Our children and families definitely benefit from the program and Oregon benefits from future citizens who have better language skills and are more likely to be successful in school and life.

By investing in the growth and sustainability of Reach Out and Read Oregon, you are investing in the lifelong health and wellbeing of not only the children I provide care for but also of children across the state. Thank you for this opportunity to share the impact of Reach Out and Read Oregon on my patients, their caregivers, and families, and I urge you to support the program through funding under the Department of Education budget.

Kind Regards,

Nellie Wirsing, MD