



March 30, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St., NE Salem, OR 97301

Re: Reach Out and Read

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to share Health Share's support for Reach Out and Read. Health Share is a Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) serving approximately 380,000 members in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties.

Reach Out and Read is a critical program to the health and wellbeing of OHP members. The evidence is clear: Healthy development in the earliest years of a child's life is foundational to lifelong health, educational achievement, and economic productivity. The earlier we intervene in a child's life, the stronger the return on investment. Upstream investments in prevention are key to fostering healthy and resilient children who then grow up to be healthy and resilient adults.

Health Share of Oregon has always had a deep commitment to prevention and early childhood through our strategic priorities. One key initiative is Reach Out and Read, an evidence-based primary care intervention with proven results. Reach Out and Read delivers vital information at routine pediatric checkups from 0- 5 years of age about the value of reading and its importance to foster, support and enhance early relational health. By integrating these experiences into pediatric care and providing books and encouragement to families, Reach Out and Read transforms pediatric care and gives children of all backgrounds and means for a strong start to life. Reach Out and Read promotes strong attachment, has been shown to reduce maternal depression and promotes school readiness by reaching children in the critical 0-3 age range.

Supporting Reach Out and Read with \$75,000 in funding will allow our program to expand and reach targeted populations in underserved communities across Oregon. The program staff are more dedicated than ever to providing our evidence-based program to historically marginalized children and families as systemic racism and COVID-19 have brought unprecedented stress and trauma into their homes. Reach Out and Read has prioritized our expansion plans to include medical clinics who serve these specific communities. For these reasons, Health Share of Oregon is proud to support Reach Out and Read.

Sincerely,

Peg King, MPH, MA
Portfolio Manager, Early Life Health Partnerships
Health Share of Oregon