



United Way
of Columbia County

February 27, 2023

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Scharf and Nguyen, and members of the House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services-

I am writing in **support of HB 2872**. As the Executive Director for United Way of Columbia County, I serve as the primary contact for Imagination Library Affiliate (DPIL) ORCOLUMBIA, serving all of Columbia County, Oregon. This program provides free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to early learners in Columbia County. All 0-5-year-old in Columbia County are eligible to enroll. Enrollment partners include Head Start, WIC, local health care providers, and local churches. Since the inception of the local program in August of 2018, we have:

- served 2,707 early learners
- provided 61,460 high-quality books
- leveraged \$67,077 local dollars
- recruited a local Advisory Committee of 12 committed volunteers

This program has been invaluable to improving Kindergarten Readiness throughout Columbia County. With approximately 33% of Columbia County Early Learners living outside of a public library service and 10% of households without internet access, building home libraries for little-ones fills an important gap. Families who participate in the program report an eagerness in family-time literacy activities. Long term studies suggest that increased exposure to literacy as a youngster can lead to improved 3rd grade literacy scores and increased high school graduation rates.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration to the passing of HB 2872, so all early learners throughout Oregon can experience the joy of literacy. This sustained matching funding would help relieve fundraising/grant writing burden at the local level. With our extra time, we would conduct outreach and enrollment activities in the most rural and underserved parts of Columbia County.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Claire E. Catt".

Claire Catt
Executive Director
United Way of Columbia County
Cell (360) 430-6778