

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

I'm Hannah Holt, a resident of Hillsboro, Oregon. I am writing in support of HB 2872.

You've probably read many statements of support about the Imaginations Libarires impact on early childhood literacy. I'd like to address an additional benefit the Imagination Library offers, and I think it's best illustrated by sharing a story about five trees.

A few years ago a storm swept through my neighborhood, knocking down a huge pine tree. Luckily it landed between two houses, only damaging a fence.

A few yards away from the fallen tree were four more pines similar in type and height. Now if one of these had fallen, it would have landed directly on my neighbor's house, putting her home and children in serious danger.

Why did the lone pine fall when the four stood?

As the four trees grew, their roots knitted and intertwined. Thus strengthened their ability to withstand the gusts that swelled that night. In short, the trees were stronger because they stood together.

This is what the Imagination Library does. It doesn't just give books. In addition, month after month, year after year, it's helping children and their caregiver grow closer together.

Think about what a picture book is: on the surface, picture books can be defined as illustrated stories usually 32 pages in length and less than 1,000 words. But underneath that...deep in the heart of it...a picture book is an opportunity for connection between a young child and a caring adult or older youth.

Because picture books by their very nature are literature for someone who can't read.

Now it's true some precocious four year olds read, however, for the most part, the audience of the Imagination Library are prereaders. A 2015 Harvard study stated, "Science shows that children who do well despite serious hardship have had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult. These relationships buffer children from developmental disruption and help them develop "resilience," or the set of skills needed to respond to adversity and thrive. ."

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/supportive-relationships-and-active-skill-building-strengthen-the-foundations-of-resilience/>

Like the trees in my neighbor, we humans are better together. There's power in proximity. And the Imagination Library gives children this gold ticket of connection every month from birth to age five regardless of background or socioeconomic status.

Because what science also tells us is children into poverty tend to spend less time talking with caregivers than their affluent peers. And according to at least one study "speech they hear is less supportive of language development."

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304194754_Language_Development_Influence_of_Socio-Economic_Status

Reading books does a great job of buffering that vocabulary. Plus it's an opportunity for discussion, laughter, questioning, and emotional growth.

We all face storms from time to time. Sometimes literal. Sometimes invisible.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library selects books that manifest love and connection in a variety of ways. Traci Sorrel's Imagination Library book, *We are Grateful oh-jah-LEE-he-lee-gah* is one example of this. It's a book filled with affection for the Cherokee practice of giving appreciation.

Even as an adult, that picture book showed me ways to express gratitude, even in hard times.

I'm grateful for roots that held firm and protected my neighbors the blustery night a few years ago. Truly we are stronger together! Let's give all kids access to books they can keep and hold closely with their parents.

Best,

Hannah Holt

Children's Author and resident of Hillsboro, Oregon