

Submitter: Jim Scheppke
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Co-Chairs Sanchez and Steiner, members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

I am asking your committee to support HB 2872 which would have Oregon join California and Washington and many other states in funding for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

As the State Librarian of Oregon for two decades I worked everyday to put books in the hands of children in every community in Oregon. The science is clear that there is nothing more impactful that we can do for children, beginning at birth, than to nourish their brain development with books and reading.

I once heard a speech by a U.S. Secretary of Education who said, "If a child gets to kindergarten having never held a book, there may be nothing that the schools can do for that child." Those words inspired me then and they inspire me today. That's why I have been volunteering my time with the Marion-Polk Early Learning Hub to start up a Dolly Parton Imagination Library project in Salem. Our project also serves Keizer, Independence and Falls City. We just began last July and we have already signed up over 1,000 children ages 1 to 4 in five zip codes, two in Salem.

Our goal is to be able to sign up every preschool child in Marion and Polk Counties, and to do that we need your help. We are asking for only \$1.7 million in state matching funds to help projects like ours across the state. State matching funds will help us greatly with our local fundraising efforts. Donors love to be matched! And don't forget that the state dollars will also be matched by Dolly Parton's foundation that heavily subsidizes the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. It's a double match!

As you have probably heard, 3rd grade reading scores are alarmingly low in Oregon. In the Salem-Keizer School district, only 26% of 3rd graders tested "proficient" last year. I can think of no other intervention that can be as effective as making sure that every preschool child in Oregon is receiving a book every month from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Research has shown that the program changes parent behavior. Parents who never have read to their children begin to do so when the Dolly Parton books arrive in the mail each month.

Please support HB 2872 so that we can ensure that no child in Oregon grows up without books.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Jim Scheppke
State Librarian of Oregon Emeritus