



(865) 428-9606

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111 E Main St, 2nd  
Floor  
Sevierville, TN 37862  
imaginationlibrary.com

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

Thank you for sharing in my dream – “Create a love for books and reading - give every child the start they need in education and life.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dolly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library began with Dolly’s desire that every child, regardless of income, would have access to books. Growing up in poverty with a father who was functionally illiterate, Dolly witnessed as a small child how her father’s inability to read and write held him back from achieving his dreams. With her father as inspiration, the Imagination Library comes from a very personal place for Dolly.

Furthermore, the program’s universal aspect is also rooted in Dolly’s personal experience, recalling what it felt like to be treated like a poor family and receiving handouts. She didn’t want any child to feel like they were receiving the books because they were poor and instead that this “**gift**” should be for all children, as equals.

**Thank you** for agreeing it is imperative your youngest learners have access to high-quality, age-appropriate books. We agree nothing is more basic, more essential, more foundational to a child’s success in life than the ability to read!

Since launching programs locally in 2007, we have seen increasing demand and participating numbers with over 42,000 registered children but we are currently serving only 20% of your 210,300 0-5 children and there are so *many more* children without access to books.

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There are many benefits of a State Imagination Library Program versus a collection of local programs scattered across the state:

- County level program partners ensure statewide coverage for all zip codes
- Equitable Access for all families to early learning resources
  - Children start kindergarten with shared experience and helps level the playing field
  - Creates a shared bond with children across neighborhoods, race, economic differences, helps break division
- Partner with state agencies to find most vulnerable children such as Foster Care, Babies born into correctional facilities and WIC Families
- Partnership with state birthing hospitals
- Partnership with State Department of Education to flag DPIL participants and program effectiveness
- Partnership with State and Local Library System – increases library use for all family members
- Tie to Adult Literacy and Dual Language Programs – multi generational focus on literacy
- Fun state level focus on family time and reading - ex: Drive with Dolly License Plate campaign increases focuses on reading, drives program enrollment, and generates funds for local programs



- Partnership with Parks and Recreation / DNR to create storybook trails using Imagination Library books
- State Program Partner works across state to fundraise and help local communities so there are never communities with children on waiting lists and if there is state budget deficit in a coming year, have mitigation funds ensuring the program continues.

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The Imagination Library is more than just a feel-good program: the body of evidence on early brain development shows the importance of reading to young children. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library certainly makes people happy, but more importantly, it changes lives :)

Over the last 28 years, The Dollywood Foundation and its affiliate partners have undertaken a wide range of evaluations, studies, and data collection on numerous aspects of the Imagination Library.

### Selected Measurable Impact Results:

- Reading 3 times a week jumped from 60 to 85%, Daily Reading doubled from 29 to 59%
- 29% Increase in children ready for Kindergarten
- Significantly stronger reading skills and higher scores on reading achievement tests over their non-participating peers, consistently from Kindergarten through 3rd Grade
- Recent study demonstrates over the last 5 years Imagination Library cohort consistently outperforming non-participating peers on Assessments from Kindergarten through 9th grade.
- Recent study key finding DPIL students overall saw a greater likelihood of positive academic results in all measures examined.
  - DPIL students scored higher on all sections of the Qualls than non-DPIL students, Higher by 4.6%, General Knowledge, 4.5% Oral Communication, 6.1% Written Communication, 6.3% Math Concepts, 2.1% Work Habits, and 2.0% Attentive Behavior
- DPIL students were retained in kindergarten at a rate of 23.8% lower than non-DPIL students
- DPIL students had a higher rate of proficiency in all three areas of the ACT Aspire than non-DPIL students.
  - The rate of proficiency for DPIL students on the Reading and Language Arts assessment was 18.26% higher than non-DPIL students
  - The rate of proficiency for DPIL students on the mathematics assessment was 15.13% higher than non-DPIL students
  - The rate of proficiency for DPIL students on the Science assessment was 24.16% higher than non-DPIL students
- DPIL students were retained in 3rd grade at a rate of 27.9% below non-DPIL students.
- DPIL students were retained between kindergarten and third grade at a rate 17% lower than non-DPIL students

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- 2022 Ohio Case Western Reserve University Study found a positive correlation between enrollment in DPIL and a child's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) score
  - Furthermore, in a 2021 survey sent to families participating in DPIL, the majority of families report:
    - Reading to their child/children more often since receiving DPIL books
    - Their child is asking to be read to more often since receiving DPIL books
    - Feeling DPIL is better preparing their child for kindergarten
    - Their child using new words they learned in DPIL books more often
    - Appreciating the uniqueness, variety, and diversity of characters in DPIL books
    - Survey showed an even greater positive impact in zip codes with higher rates of poverty.
- Establishing reading routines brings about increased stability, emotional well-being, and improved family atmosphere. Books provide attachment and connection in families creating conditions that allow parents to parent.
- A healing effect in the community manifesting in emerging neighborhood literacy initiatives, increased library usage, and connection to Adult / Dual language reading programs.

For over 28 years, The Dollywood Foundation annually contributes millions of dollars to make the Imagination Library available, covering expenses such as administrative, operational, database management, marketing, training, technical assistance and more. Our shared cost model keeps local program costs down to only reduced book, mailing and local administrative expenses.

**We ask for your consideration and support of HB 2872.** State commitment and matching funds provide for expansion and sustainability. Match funding allows local partners to grow community enrollments and engage more families. Without this funding, this valuable program will not expand and local communities struggle to raise their shared 50% portion. Shared funding model creates a robust private/public partnership

Thank you for caring so much and The Dollywood Foundation is thrilled to partner with the State of Oregon to get more books into the hands of more Oregon children and families!

Kindly,

Nora Briggs, Executive Director,

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