

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

From: Hilly Alexander, Wilsonville, Oregon

I am writing in support of HB 2872, a modest funding proposal to bring the Imagination Library program statewide, with an estimated cost of only \$1.7 million dollars.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails a high quality age-appropriate book once a month to children from birth until their fifth birthday at no cost to the parents.

Dolly Parton's home state of Tennessee was the first state to offer the Imagination Library statewide. An Impact Analysis after 10 years of operation published in 2015 concluded that participating children were better prepared for kindergarten and Tennessee third-graders who participated in the Imagination Library scored higher on reading assessments than non-participants. Non-tangible benefits include excitement about books and reading and stronger family relationships.

The Wilsonville Imagination Library extends the Wilsonville Public Library's early literacy programs. We have mailed about 89,000 books in the last eleven years. The most common remark we hear from parents is that their children get excited when their book arrives in the mail and want to read it right away. Parents who might not otherwise read aloud with their child, read the new book together.

A local Mom recently told me about her experience with the Imagination Library. One of her kids has already graduated from the program and her younger daughter is enrolled. She is so impressed with the quality of the books. Then she added that receiving the books has made a huge difference in her single-income family. They would not have been able to afford all the books.

The statewide Oregon Imagination Library Project will lower the cost for existing programs and lower the cost barrier for starting a local Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. This will allow more Oregon children to benefit from a proven early literacy program.

The Directors of the Wilsonville Public Library Foundation which funds Wilsonville Imagination Library strongly support House Bill 2872. We urge all members of the Committee to support HB 2872.

Thank you!

Additional information:

Benefits: The program delivers books to the youngest children. Reading with babies and toddlers supports their brain development. Children beg their parents to read to them when their book arrives in the mail. This is especially valuable in families who are not used to reading together. Children from all socio-economic situations receive the same book and that helps to create community once they reach kindergarten.

Book Selection: A team of experts meets annually to select the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library books for each age group. Currently, two of the twelve books children receive each year are in both Spanish

and English. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library encourages families to read together and builds routines around reading. The books include reading tips that are tailored to each book.

Affiliate Responsibilities: Local affiliates of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library are responsible for enrolling eligible children and raising the money to pay for books and postage.

Wilsonville Mom Lauren Nakamura tells us: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library "has allowed us to build our own library at home. We receive a new book every month and it has now made checking the mail so exciting! Reading has been so impactful for Connor and his vocabulary has just blossomed from books. He just turned 2 years old, and he is already reading some of his favorite books to us! Not only does reading help with their development, but it also makes for the most special memories one on one. Books are part of our every day, and we are so grateful for this program in our community. Being able to receive a new book each month until he is 5 is such an incredible way to keep books exciting and a part of our routines."