



Imagination Library of Oregon

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

My name is Laurie McNichols and I'm the State Director for Imagination Library of Oregon. I am half of the State Team, along with Community Engagement Coordinator, Kaylee Chrystal, that has been in place since August of 2024 to support Oregon's Local Program Partners in expanding the program to reach Oregon children in every county and every zip code in the state.

Why do we focus this effort on our youngest children? The fact is that skill of reading doesn't naturally occur on its own; The Reading Network is something that must be cultivated. By the age of 4, a child's brain is already 90% developed. It's never too early to introduce a child to books. Unfortunately, though, for children whose first introduction to books and reading doesn't happen until kindergarten, the critical window to build that reading network will have already passed.

Studies prove that children who participated in Imagination Library had significantly higher test scores, not just in reading, but also in math and science; and not just in kindergarten, but through to high school. A Local Program Partner in Douglas County who recently surveyed their enrolled families found that, for 28%, books from Imagination Library were the only children's books in the home. Receiving books monthly from Imagination Library significantly increases the amount of time spent reading and the one-to-one time a child spends with their caregivers.



The books a child receives from Imagination Library are high quality, age appropriate, and represent diverse identities and experiences. The first book a child receives when they are enrolled is "The Little Engine That Could," both because it's a favorite of Dolly's from her childhood and for the message it conveys.

Many of the books include title specific reading tips. Two of the selections for each age group are Bilingual Spanish/English and there are also braille and audio book options available through our partner American Printing House for children who are blind or low-vision. The books are mailed monthly at no cost to the families. They are for ALL children, no matter their family's circumstances.

As a result of the state support that began in May of 2024, we have achieved full coverage in 35 of 36 counties and are now mailing books to over 63,000 Oregon children, that's almost 9,000 more children than when the state match began.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you why your support on House Bill 2811 is critical for Oregon's children.

With gratitude,

Laurie McNichols

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