

Thank you, Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez & Members of the Committee

My name is **Amy McCormick Friesz** and I'm a Development Officer with SMART Reading, a SMART Volunteer Reader at Astor Elementary, and a resident of Astoria.

SMART Reading is a statewide early literacy organization that provides two key ingredients students need to succeed: reading support and access to books.

Since our founding in 1992, we've served over 312,000 young readers in 32 Oregon counties and three tribal nations, and given away over 4.7 million books. **I'm here today to ask you to continue your support for SMART Reading through grant-in-aid.**

As you know well, we are in the midst of a literacy crisis in our state with only 39% of Oregon third-graders meeting reading benchmarks, and significant education gaps for students from marginalized communities.

We are heartened to see the heightened attention on early literacy by the Governor and the legislature, and we know there is still much work to do. While we support new initiatives and efforts, today we simply urge you to continue supporting research-backed, community-based organizations like SMART as the proven simple and effective way to help ensure kids get the support they need. Since 2013 the legislature has provided grant-in-aid funds to SMART so that we can provide one-on-one reading support and buy books for our students– for some children, it is the only book they own at home.

90% of SMART Reading students show significant improvement in overall literacy development, including phonics skills, vocabulary, and more. SMART Reading provides a vital service to schools in every corner of our state at no cost to them. I urge you to continue supporting this critical work by continuing SMART's grant-in-aid allocation. Thank you for your time, and your support of literacy!

Link to register:

<https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/wagner/Documents/Legislators%20to%20Hear%20Statewide%20Budget%20Priorities%20at%20Community%20Budget%20Hearings.pdf>