

Submitter: Jim Scheppke
On Behalf Of: Marion and Polk Early Learning Hub
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4022

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice Chairs Scharf and Walters, and House Interim Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services members,

As the State Librarian of Oregon for two decades my number one goal, working with local libraries, was to get books into the hands of every child in Oregon. Why? Because years of research have shown that children, especially preschool children, who grow up without books in their home, and without being read to by their first teachers – their parents and caregivers – may never become proficient readers.

I once heard from a head of the U.S. Department of Education, Lamar Alexander, 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.” I believe that to be true, and that’s why we need to do everything possible to prevent that tragedy.

And that’s why in my retirement I have been a volunteer for the Marion and Polk Early Learning Hub, helping to start up the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in Salem and throughout Marion and Polk Counties.

We started only about three and a half years ago and we already have signed up over 40% of all children under five in the two counties, about 8,800 children. And we hope to sign up thousands more in the years to come.

Matching support from the State of Oregon has been the key to our success. Donors have been much more willing to support the program when they learn that every dollar they donate will be matched by the State.

It is time to insure that this matching support will continue into the future so that every preschool child in Oregon will have the opportunity to build a home library because of an amazing partnership of local affiliates like the Marion and Polk Early Learning Hub, the State of Oregon and the Dollywood Foundation. House Bill 4022 will do this.

Thank you for your consideration of House Bill 4022.

Sincerely,

Jim Scheppke, State Librarian, 1991-2011
Salem

Volunteer, Marion and Polk Early Learning Hub