

Submitter: Amanda Flores
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4022

Chair Hartman, Vice Chairs Scharf and Walters and House Interim Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services members, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Amanda Flores and I serve as an educator at St. John the Baptist Catholic School in Milwaukie, and a mom of two children ages 4 and 7. I'm here in support of HB 4022.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has had a huge impact on my family and I want to share my experience as to why I feel HB 4022 is so important to early childhood literacy across the state. Early learning matters because a child's brain develops faster from birth to age five than at any other time in life. Research shows that early exposure to books and rich language builds vocabulary, strengthens cognitive growth, and directly improves school readiness. Children who start strong in literacy are far more likely to read on grade level by third grade, a key predictor of long-term academic success and graduation. The variety of stories that are presented in the books selected by The Imagination Library are opening children up to large vocabulary acquisition, and exposure to stories from multiple different cultures and backgrounds.

My son graduated from the Imagination Library the summer he entered Kindergarten, with a love for books, and for reading. The last book he received was "Look out Kindergarten, Here I Come" and receiving this as he was just getting ready to go into Kindergarten really helped boost his confidence. When my daughter was born we quickly signed her up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. My daughter is still getting a book each month and the joy and excitement that comes with opening the mailbox to see her name on a book is the best feeling. The activities that are printed on the special copies produced through The Imagination Library give fun questions and activities for us to do as a family. It's not only helping to foster a love of reading, it's helping to foster more time spent as a family not on devices.

HB 4022 supports families by putting high-quality books in homes, especially for children who may not otherwise have access. This is one of the simplest, most effective ways to close early learning gaps before they widen. I respectfully urge your support for this bill, because Oregon's children deserve the strongest possible start.