



Imagination Library of Oregon

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

My name is Kaylee Chrystal, and I serve as the Community Engagement Coordinator for Imagination Library of Oregon. I'm here today in strong support of House Bill 4022.

In my role, I support the 56 Local Program Partners across the state and work closely with our State Director, Laurie McNichols, on program expansion. When I testified before this committee last winter, I had been in this role for about six months. At that point, I was getting to know our partners and learning where I could best support them, but even then, it was clear that our Local Program Partners were foundational to bringing the Imagination Library into their communities.

Now, 18 months into this work, my perspective has deepened. I've seen the quiet, behind-the-scenes work our Local Program Partners do every day—enrolling children, sustaining funding to cover the costs of books and mailing, building trust with caregivers, and making sure books arrive month after month. With this fuller view, I can say confidently that Local Program Partners are the engine that makes Dolly Parton's vision for the Imagination Library possible in Oregon.

When Oregon launched its statewide expansion of the Imagination Library in May of 2024, powered by a shared public-private investment, the impact was immediate. Established partners like the Early Learning Hub of Central Oregon expanded across Deschutes County, reaching families in Bend, Redmond, and Sisters. At the same time, new partners felt the support and confidence to establish programs of their own—including United Way of the Columbia-Willamette and the Lower Umpqua Library in partnership with the Reedsport Rotary—extending access into both urban and rural communities across Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington, and Douglas counties.

With full statewide coverage achieved by April of 2025, any child under the age of five in Oregon is now eligible to enroll—opening the door to a lifelong love of reading. That expanded access also made it possible to launch the English-Spanish bilingual collection last summer, bringing beloved stories to even more families.

I'd like to close with some exciting news. This month—February 2026—Oregon will mail its four-millionth Imagination Library book. In just under two years since the statewide launch in May of 2024, more than 1.33 million books have reached Oregon families—over a third of all Imagination Library books ever mailed in our state since 2007. This milestone reflects the strength of the partnership between the State of Oregon, DELC, and our Local Program Partners.

Behind every one of those books is the steady, often unseen work of a Local Program Partner—then a child opening the mailbox, a caregiver reading aloud, and a story becoming part of a family's life. Dolly says you can never get enough books into the hands of enough children, and here in Oregon, that belief is being lived out in urban, rural, and coastal communities alike.

On behalf of our Local Program Partners and the families they serve, thank you to the State of Oregon and the Department of Early Learning and Care. I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 4022.

Sincerely,



Kaylee Chrystat

Community Engagement Coordinator
Imagination Library of Oregon