

February 3, 2026

RE: HB 4022 Relating to children's literacy

Dear House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services Committee Members:

Children who arrive at kindergarten ready to learn to read have developed their cognitive capacity (how they think and reason), physical gross and fine motor skills (how to hold books, turn pages), social skills (taking turns, sharing), and language skills (using many different words to describe pictures in books).

Kindergartners with these skills in place are more likely to achieve third grade reading proficiency. Third-grade reading proficiency is a significant predictor of eighth-grade reading proficiency, which in turn is a significant predictor of ninth-grade outcomes, high school graduation, and college enrollment rates. Parents are their children's most important teachers; raising children doesn't come with instructions on how to best support a child's growth toward kindergarten readiness. Medical providers are often a family's first -- and may be their only -- connection to early childhood development supports.

Reach Out and Read directly partners with medical clinicians to champion and promote daily shared reading and language-rich activities for parents and young children. During routine well-child visits, clinicians give the family a new children's book, observing and guiding parent-child interactions exploring the book. They assess the child's fine and gross motor, cognitive, language, literacy, relational, and social-emotional development in partnership with the parent. Discussing shared reading and early relationships opens the door to talking about bedtime routines, screen time, and other social drivers of health. Clinicians model and normalize early literacy activities and offer anticipatory guidance to parents on supporting their child's holistic development, including helping families connect to and use other literacy services and supports. In SFY 2025, pediatric clinicians integrated the Reach Out and Read model into 176,000 well-child visits, serving 88,000 families across 30 Oregon counties.

Oregon has taken many proactive steps to support early literacy and kindergarten readiness in the state's youngest citizens. We support The Imagination Library program as part of the continuum of early literacy services provided to families in Oregon. Our two organizations and other local and statewide partners help families build home libraries, encourage a love of reading, and support early literacy development. We encourage the committee to keep in mind the early literacy system as a whole. Part of the Department of Early Learning and Care's mandate is to work for greater coordination and collaboration of Oregon's early learning system.

Reach Out and Read has been honored to serve Oregon's families and children, birth through age 5 for twenty-five years. We are available to answer any questions you may have and stand ready to work with you in whatever way may be helpful as you continue to grow and support early literacy in Oregon.

Sincerely,



Executive Director, Reach Out and Read Northwest