



Imagination Library of Oregon

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Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the Early Childhood and Behavior Health Committee,

My name is Kaylee Chrystal, and am the Community Engagement Coordinator for Imagination Library of Oregon. I'm here to express my strong support of House Bill 4022.

In my role, I have the honor of supporting Oregon's 50 Local Program Partners and working closely with our State Director, Laurie McNichols, on statewide efforts. It quickly became clear that these partners are more than the operational backbone of the Imagination Library—they are its heart. Their deep commitment to children and families reflects the love and intention Dolly Parton envisioned when she created the program over 30 years ago.

Over the past 18 months, I've seen the quiet, powerful work they do each day—enrolling children, securing funding for books and mailing, building trust with caregivers, and ensuring high-quality, age-appropriate books arrive in homes month after month at no cost to families. Because of their dedication, the joy of reading is reaching children in urban, rural, and coastal communities across Oregon.

When Oregon launched its statewide expansion of the Imagination Library in May 2024—powered by a shared public-private partnership between the Department of Early Learning and Care and our Local Program Partners—the impact was immediate and far-reaching. The collaboration strengthened existing partners, such as the Early Learning Hub of Central Oregon, enabling expansion across Deschutes County and reaching families in Bend, Redmond, and Sisters for the first time.

At the same time, the initiative inspired new organizations to launch local programs of their own. The United Way of the Columbia-Willamette and the Lower Umpqua Library, in partnership with the Reedsport Rotary, stepped forward to expand access for children and families across both urban and rural communities in Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington, and Douglas counties.

By April 2025—less than a year after the statewide launch—we reached a remarkable milestone: full statewide coverage. Today, every child under age five in Oregon can enroll, opening the door to a lifelong love of reading in every corner of the state. This expanded reach also made it possible to introduce the English-Spanish bilingual collection last summer, ensuring even more families can share meaningful stories and build strong literacy foundations together.

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

Behind each of those books is the steady, often unseen work of a Local Program Partner—work that culminates in a child opening the mailbox, a caregiver reading aloud, and a story becoming part of a family's daily life. As Dolly Parton often says, you can never get enough books into the hands of enough children. Here in Oregon, that belief is being put into action 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 for your leadership and commitment. I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 4022.

Sincerely,



Kaylee Chrystal

Community Engagement Coordinator
Imagination Library of Oregon