



Imagination Library of Oregon

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ImaginationLibrary.com/Oregon

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health,

My name is Laurie McNichols, and I am the State Director for the Imagination Library of Oregon.

I'm here today to express my strong support for HB 4022, codification of the Imagination Library of Oregon.

We all know early literacy is one of the strongest predictors of sustained academic success. Children not reading proficiently by the third grade are far more likely to struggle in later grades, disengage from school, and face limited economic opportunity in adulthood. These challenges disproportionately affect children from low-income families, rural communities, and historically underserved populations.

The Imagination Library was designed to address these gaps by supporting children's first teachers: their families. Since its inception more than 30 years ago, the program has expanded from Dolly's home county in Tennessee to reach children and families in five countries.

The books that are included each year are selected by a panel of early literacy experts who review hundreds of potential titles for inclusion. They take great care to thoughtfully select books that meet the different needs of children as they progress from birth to age five.

The collection for each age group includes the very best of timeless classics as well as new favorites. I have uploaded to OLIS the 2026 book list for the English collection and bilingual English/Spanish collection as well as an infographic that outlines key themes and concepts by age.

Earlier this month, The Dollywood Foundation issued a press release sharing findings from the groundbreaking International Research Study on the Imagination Library.

The study found that participation in the Imagination Library is linked to stronger early literacy outcomes and richer reading experiences at home, helping close early literacy gaps by strengthening foundational skills.

In data from the study specific to the United States, children who participated in the Imagination Library were 11 times more likely to be interested in books, 15 times more likely to join in during shared reading, and 9 times more likely to initiate shared reading, compared to children not in the program.

The Key Findings and USA Impact documents from the study have also been uploaded to OLIS for your review.

In closing I want to emphasize that codifying the Imagination Library will provide stability for this established program and the Oregon partners who make the program available in their communities to ensure that children and families can rely on this vital resource without interruption.

I urge you to support HB 4022, an investment in Oregon's future.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie McNichols". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurie McNichols

State Director
Imagination Library of Oregon