

February 27 2015

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Committee on Children.  
I am Alberto Cohen-Abbo, MD a general pediatrician in the Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

I am here to support the passing of the Raised Bill No. 209, that concerns the funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.

I am sure that everyone in this room remembers a favorite book of your childhood. You probably have read the same book hundred of times to your own children with your own special effects, voices and theatrics.  
Reading that book still transports you to a time where you were able to imagine, be free and dream. Reading a book became a pleasure that promoted an early literacy. Reading a book gave you the skills for learning in primary school, middle school, high school and made you successful in college and graduate school. Reading became a pleasure that has accompanied you everywhere. You are here today because you loved someone reading a book to you. Reading was a gift for your lifetime. You know how to pass the flame.

Unfortunately, many parents born in poverty were never given that opportunity; furthermore, illiterate parents do not know that they do not need to actually read the book to enjoy it with their children.

The Reach and Read program has allowed parents born in poverty to own a library of their own. These parents can also share those special moments with their children. With personalized guidance from a trusted expert, the pediatrician, these parents learn how to engage with their children and pass the flame as well. The Reach and Read program serves 4 million children across all 50 states from 6 months to 5 years. Research shows that the Reach and Read intervention gives preschool children vocabulary scores up to 6 months ahead of children not involved with the program. These Reach and Read children have the opportunity to be on target when they start Kindergarten. These children will be on track and most likely be successful high school graduates instead of dropouts. The investment in Reach and Read program makes sense. It is more effective and less costly to invest in books now that in juvenile detention centers later.

Dear members on the committee, please fund this wonderful program.  
Let's give the torch to these parents. I am sure that they will run and pass it....  
Thanks for your attention.