

Testimony for SB 209

I am a Board Certified Pediatrician and Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as a former Special Education Teacher, and I am writing to you today to express my sincere hope that you approve funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.

Nothing is more important to the future of our state, and our nation, than fostering the health and development of our children. At the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference and Exhibit in October of 2014, Hillary Clinton unveiled her "Too Small to Fail" campaign along with the new American Academy of Pediatrics' Literacy Toolkit containing recommendations for all children from birth through the age of five. It is a national effort of pediatricians and a policy of the American Academy of Pediatrics that early literacy be promoted at every well child visit.

It is hard to describe the impact that Reach Out and Read has on facilitating this initiative. When a child is handed a book, their face lights up with delight. A mother recently told me that her child was excited to be coming to the doctor today because it meant that she was going to get another book. The book that each child is given at their well child appointment serves as a physical reminder that words, and books and reading are tremendously important to the intellectual development of children. Research has shown that in homes where the television is continually on, children hear 30 million fewer words by the age of four. Words and language are the basis of our intellect, and access to books and early shared reading tremendously impacts the development of our most vulnerable citizens.

Reach Out and Read interventions are associated with a markedly more positive attitude toward reading aloud by parents, more frequent reading aloud by parents, improved parent-child interactions, improvements in the home literacy environment, and significant increases in expressive and receptive language in early childhood.

Fifteen years ago there was a survey of homes of children in Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods. Shockingly, a TOTAL of 33 books were found in the homes of 10,000 children. It is my sincere hope that Connecticut continues to fund the Reach Out and Read Program, allowing every child to own a book, and that our youngest citizens are afforded the greatest opportunity for optimal intellectual development.

Respectfully submitted,

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