



January 26, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Bartolome, Representative Urban, and esteemed members of the Committee on Children.

My name is Catherine Wiley, MD, and I am general pediatrician, practicing in the Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center here in Hartford. I am here today in my role as Medical Director to Reach Out and Read Connecticut, to urge you to support **Senate Bill 209** to reinstate funding for **Reach Out and Read** in Connecticut.

It is unthinkable that in 2015, despite all that we know about early brain development and the critical first 1000 days of life, more than half of all young children are not read to and do not have access to any books at all. Over 1/3 of our children arrive in kindergarten lacking the foundational language and literacy skills they need to learn to read – things like vocabulary, letter recognition and print concepts. At the end of third grade, 2/3 of US children, and a shocking 83% of children growing up in low income families, are not proficient readers – and the sad reality is that few of those children will ever catch up. Success in reading is a powerful predictor of success in life, while low literacy is strongly correlated to unemployment, poverty and imprisonment. The Department of Justice says "The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence and crime is welded to reading failure."

The desire to read is not born in a child. It must be planted and nurtured over time. The seed needs to be planted and nurtured in the home, well before entry into any formal schooling. Reach Out and Read capitalizes on the trusting relationship between parents and pediatricians, providing personalized advice and guidance about reading, and developmentally and culturally appropriate new books at each well child visit from 6 months to 5 years of age. There is solid research demonstrating that low income parents who participate in Reach Out and Read read aloud to their children more often than other parents. Their children have improved performance on formal language tests – a hefty 6 month developmental gain relative to children who are not read to – and they enter kindergarten prepared to learn to read.