

Dear Legislators,

As pediatric health care providers, we are in the ideal position to encourage and promote the importance of reading from a very young age. The Pediatric Care Center in Bristol, where I am employed as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, started the Reach Out and Read Program 2 weeks ago. We have about 638 children from 6 months to 5 years of age.

The program has been very well received by parents and children. As I explain the program to parents you can see the delight in their faces! As a person who has a life-long love of books and reading, I am only too happy to encourage parents to read to and with their children. I explain to parents the benefit of reading to their child from infancy and beyond: early exposure to language helps children acquire the basic skills needed to learn and to read. The Reach Out and Read program will undoubtedly change the lives of our families, many of whom are low-income families.

We need to view funding for Reach Out and Read as a necessity, not a luxury. The future of all our children depends on early literacy. If children can enter school on grade level for reading they are more likely to graduate from high-school and go on to higher education, thus a more promising future. I urge you to support funding for this vital program.

Sincerely yours,

Cathy Egan Mieczkowski, APRN PNP-BC