



February 3, 2015

Hello Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban,  
and members of the Committee on Children,

I'm Emily Powers, MD, a pediatric resident at Yale New Haven Hospital and the mother of an 11 month old girl. Reach Out to Read is one of the most joyful parts of both jobs.

The kids I work with in my clinic are exclusively low-income kids on Medicaid. Except for what we give them in clinic, they may not receive ANY other books until they reach school age. I was thinking about this yesterday when I was reading to Addie, my daughter, at bedtime. It was a beautiful book called Count-a-Block. One of 87 other age appropriate books she has already been given by her large and very well educated extended family. With these books, we are establishing structured and positive family time with her, enhancing her language development, and teaching her about the world. We are setting her up for success from the very beginning! If not for Reach Out and Read, kids with limited family resources and lack of literary tradition simply would not have access to the same successes that Addie does.

I also see Reach Out to Read as an important part of my ability to establish trust and a therapeutic relationship with my patients. Some of my job involves putting kids through uncomfortable exams, giving them painful shots, and helping parents change unhealthy habits. Giving the gift of a book is a way to inject positivity into the relationship, to help distract them during the unpleasant parts of the visit, and to serve as a welcome bridge to discussing the myriad benefits of reading. It helps establish a positive relationship with me which encourages them to come to visits and follow my guidance on other important health topics.

And my patients love those books! We pour over them together in the exam room, look at the pictures, discuss the importance of family time and pre-literacy. I counsel them on making reading a part of the bedtime routine every night. For my Spanish-speakers, the bilingual books are often the only books they have that they can read with their children and they have the added benefit of increasing English skills for parents. I only wish I could give them more.

Thanks so much for your consideration. I could talk on this subject at length but hope the above thoughts will suffice for now.

Thanks again!

Emily Powers, MD

Saint Raphael Campus  
1450 Chapel Street  
New Haven, CT 06511