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## REACH OUT AND READ CONNECTICUT

**Testimony of Kerry McMahon**  
**Fairfield County Program Coordinator, Reach Out and Read**  
Before the Committee on Children  
January 27, 2015

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kerry McMahon, I am the Fairfield County program coordinator for Reach Out and Read. Reach Out and Read prepares our youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together. I am part of a Connecticut team that services 71 clinical locations in the State of Connecticut. We distribute close to 66,000 books annually to almost 40,000 children between the ages of 6 months to 5 years.

I am here to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.

I want to specifically note a few of the benefits that I see of the Reach Out and Read program from working closely with the pediatricians and medical staff at our Reach Out and Read program locations. As a program coordinator, my responsibilities include visiting our clinical locations multiple times during the year to ensure that they have an adequate inventory of books, in the appropriate languages to distribute to their patients. We work with our programs to ensure that all patients receive a new developmentally and culturally appropriate book.

The mission of Reach Out and Read is to make books a routine part of pediatric primary care so that children grow up with a love of books and reading, with a special emphasis on children growing up in low income families. I have been told by multiple medical providers that the Reach Out and Read books they give to their patients are often the only books their patients have access to. One Bridgeport family has multiple children and they have created a book shelf at their house specifically to hold their Reach Out and Read books. Their pediatrician (like all of our Reach Out and Read medical providers) carefully selects the books that he gives these children so they do not have repeat titles in their home library. The children in this family look forward to picking out a book each night to read together as a family. Not only does Reach Out and Read provide the resources to develop their reading skills, it also nurtures quality family time together and encourages reading aloud together as a family.

[www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)



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When recently visiting a Reach Out and Read program in Stamford, I was able to enjoy how Reach Out and Read can benefit both parents and children. As I sat in the waiting room, a 5 year old boy was reading a bi-lingual Spanish/English book with his mother. He was reading the lines in Spanish and asking his Mom to read the lines back to him in English. I realized that this boy was helping his mom with her English. This brief encounter between a boy and his mother showed me how the power of reading can go a long way regardless of your age. Not only were they learning together, but you could see the bond between this mother and son over reading a book together.

One final benefit that I would like to mention about Reach Out and Read is how pediatricians can use our books during their well child visits as a guide to determine if a child is meeting certain developmental milestones. One of our Greenwich pediatricians has certain books set aside that she uses during well child visits. She will often say "point to the red square" or "point to the letters on this page that are in your name". This is a favorite tactic of this provider as she says that the kids enjoy the interaction and her observations from this are extremely beneficial in determining the well-being of the child.

The benefits to children and families of Reach Out and Read are endless. Our children deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and consideration.