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January 26, 2015



Good afternoon, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children. I am Mark Masselli, President and CEO of Community Health Center, Inc. and I am testifying today in support of Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.

For over forty years, CHC has provided top quality integrated care to underserved populations in Connecticut. We understand the importance of treating the whole person, including oral health, behavioral health, and addressing other factors that can contribute to poor health outcomes.

Low literacy is one of these factors, so CHC has eagerly participated in the Reach Out and Read program for the past fifteen years. Each year, our primary care providers from across the state have spoken with thousands of parents and their children about the importance of this program and have distributed tens of thousands of books. Parents are given age appropriate and tailored advice about books and reading, and advised to incorporate reading into daily routines. For many of the children we serve, Reach Out and Read books are the only books they own.

The families served by Reach Out and Read have more books in their homes and read together more often. As a result, studies show that our children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies, stronger language skills, and a remarkable six-month developmental gain in the skills they need to read. Children who arrive at school ready to learn to read are more likely to continue to perform at or above grade level.

Reach Out and Read's mission is to make books and literacy guidance a routine part of pediatric primary care, especially for underserved populations, so that children grow up with a love of books and reading. Fifteen different peer-reviewed research studies have demonstrated important positive outcomes when families receive books and guidance through the Reach Out and Read program.

This is truly a broad based community effort, and we have been honored to have leading legislators visit our sites and read to some of our young patients. I strongly encourage you to support Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.



*Serving underserved and uninsured patients at Connecticut's largest network of community health centers.*