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January 26, 2015

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

I am Rachel Osborn, MD, a general pediatrician and the director of quality improvement for the Primary Care Center at the St. Raphael's Campus for Yale New Haven Hospital. I am writing today to lend my support to Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.

As a pediatrician, I view low literacy as a health problem. Children who do not master reading are much less likely to graduate high school, and are thus similarly more likely to suffer from various chronic diseases as adults. Reach Out and Read is a national program to promote literacy by changing the way pediatricians practice medicine. Reach Out and Read gives doctors an evidence-based strategy to promote child development and learning. The program is highly economical, requiring little infrastructure, providing books purchased at a sharply discounted rate and relying on pediatricians as an army of highly trained volunteers and trusted authorities to bring this important preventive strategy to families.

In my practice, I've often had parents ask me for books at visits separate from the well child visits in which we provide the Reach out and Read books. They have come to associate their visits with my colleagues and myself as an opportunity to grow their library at home. They enjoy sharing the books with their children.

The mission of Reach Out and Read is to make books and literacy guidance 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 poverty. The Reach Out and Read model is a scientifically validated model to promote literacy skills beginning at the early age of 6 months. Fifteen peer-reviewed research studies demonstrate important positive outcomes when families receive books and guidance through the ROR program. These studies have been carried out in at least 10 different states, including Connecticut, with bilingual families, non-English speaking families and families for whom there are no books in the home language, yet the results are the same: Reach Out and Read families are significantly more likely to read to their children and to have more children's books in their homes. Of utmost importance, research documents that children served by the Reach Out and Read program show an increase of 4-8 points on

vocabulary tests by the age of 2. For a two-year-old, this increase represents an approximately six-month gain, developmentally-speaking, preventing the "falling behind" routinely observed and measured in children living in low-income families.

No community interested in the health and welfare of its children can be without Reach Out and Read. Parents need and want guidance about reading with their very young children and they need and want quality children's books. Reach Out and Read fills this need and narrows the gap for the neediest families. The children deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and consideration.