



Rebecca Frontz, DO
Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center
76 New Britain Ave, CT 06106
(860) 837-6800



Testimony of Rebecca Frontz of the Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center
IN SUPPORT OF SB 209,

AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE REACH OUT AND READ PROGRAM
Before the Connecticut General Assembly's Committee on Children
February 5, 2015

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

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony in support of SB 209. My name is Rebecca Frontz and I am a pediatrician at the Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. I am currently in residency training and have spent the last three years caring for the children of the Greater Hartford area. The Primary Care Center is the largest pediatric primary care practice between Boston and New York City. The practice serves more than 15,000 children from the Hartford neighborhoods and more than 85 percent of the children are insured by Medicaid. Reach Out and Read has been an integral part of the well-child visits for these children.

Currently, two thirds of children in the United States each year fail to develop reading proficiency by the end of third grade. There is a responsibility of pediatricians to help prevent illiteracy, much like we prevent other health problems in children. By the age of 3 years, children born into low-income families, like those served at the Primary Care Center, hear roughly 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers. This is a significant word gap. Research has consistently shown that children growing up in these low-income families are at highest risk of reading failure. They typically are 12-14 months below national norms for language and pre-reading skills at the time of entering kindergarten and they rarely catch up. It is important to intervene at a young age because 90% of brain development occurs between birth and age 5, a critical window for learning.

With Reach Out and Read, pediatricians at our office provide developmentally-appropriate books to children, ages 6 months through 5 years, and advise parents about the importance of reading aloud together. As seen in 15 independent published research studies, children served by Reach Out and Read score three to 6 months ahead of their non-Reach Out and Read peers on vocabulary tests. Research shows that children who start school on track are more likely to reach their full educational, social, and life potential.

In my practice, a mother of a patient cried upon receiving a book from the Reach Out and Read program, stating she does not have the financial means to buy books for her children. She acknowledged their importance in learning, but admitted she was unable to take her children to the library to borrow books as she works most days and transportation from her home to the

library is very difficult. Between her two children and their frequent well-child appointments at the clinic, they now have a home library of over 15 books. She recently thanked me and told me they read a bedtime story together nightly.

I urge the committee to support SB 209. The parents in Connecticut deserve guidance regarding reading to their children. The children in our communities deserve to have access to Reach Out and Read to support their school readiness and foster continued success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Frontz, DO