

My name is Ruth Magraw and I am writing to request your support for Senate Bill 209. I am a pediatrician at the Fair Haven Community Health Center in New Haven, CT, a Federally Qualified Health Center. I have worked there for 28 years. Much of my time is spent on preventative health such as administering immunizations to prevent illness and reviewing safety measures to prevent accidents. And as we know, preventative medicine is good for the individual and the society.

Preventative medicine can also be used to combat low literacy. Being read to at home from a young age improves later educational outcomes. Books cost money. When economic means are very limited, books are often a low priority. The Reach Out and Read (ROAR) program has programs that educate clinicians on the use of the program at Well Child Visits. It also allows us to supply age and language appropriate books to our patients at each Well Child Visit from the age of 6 months to 5 years old. We are able to actively promote the importance of reading to children on a daily basis. And the importance of children seeing their parents reading. Like a stone thrown into water, the ripple effect is powerful.

Imagine handing a book to a child as young as 6 month old. the child takes the book looks at it, chews on it (it is a hard paged book for this age). The watch them light up as parents/family members show them the pictures and read to them. I have had the joy of seeing this time after time. In older kids there is a variation on this but it is always exciting. It is a powerful statement for all of us.

Please support Senate Bill 209. The ROAR program is a powerful tool in the fight against health care and income disparities.

Sincerely,

Ruth Magraw, MD
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