

From : Tish Rabe, Mystic, Connecticut

January 25, 2015

Subject: Support of Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for The Reach Out and Read Program

My name is Tish Rabe and, like all of you, I wear many hats. I am a mom, a step-mom, a grandmother, a best-selling children's book author, an Advisory Board member for Reach Out and Read and a passionate advocate for the importance of early childhood literacy. I am proud to be one of two authors in the world allowed to write rhyming Cat in the Hat books and you'll see in a moment why that's important. I would like to share three things with you today.

First, I was lucky enough after I graduated from college to be part of the creative production staff of Sesame Street in 1974 in Season 3. The goal of the series, as many of you know, was to narrow the gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers and help them learn their numbers and letters to get ready for kindergarten. I am heartbroken to be standing here 40 years later, with the news that today the gap between low-income children and those with more advantaged backgrounds is wider than ever and the achievement gap between these children is the widest in our state of Connecticut.

But we can fix this: We can give every Connecticut child in need, the books they need to read to succeed.

Secondly, I know it is difficult for many of us to imagine what it is like to live in a home where there are NO books. My brothers are convinced that I became a children's book author because our mother read to us every night- all lined up on the couch- and I think they're right. Often the books the amazing and passionate doctors of Reach Out and Read give these children are not only the first and only CHILDREN's book in the home, but the only book at all.

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Finally, I created two books last year expressly to fulfill the needs of Reach Out and Read Connecticut. They needed books with simple text for caregivers who struggled to read themselves or for whom English was not their first language. I

also knew that children learn to read more quickly when they are engaged with the book, so I added open ended questions like “What is the kitten thinking?” to engage them in the reading process. I am connected to a wealth of creative talent right here in Connecticut- best-selling children’s authors, illustrators, graphic artists, song writers, social media experts and we CAN reach every child in Connecticut.

We can give every Connecticut child in need, the books they need to read to succeed.

But we can’t do it- without your help.

Thank you.

Tish Rabe, Reach Out and Read Advisory Board member, children’s book author, advocate for early childhood literacy