

Testimony for SB 209 regarding the Reach out and Read Program

To the Honorable Legislators of the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Connecticut,

By way of introduction, my name is Anton Alerte and I am a pediatrician employed by the University of Connecticut and practicing at the Burgdorf Pediatric Primary care Center in Hartford. The Burgdorf Clinic is located in the North end of Hartford and is jointly supported by the St. Francis Medical Center and the University of Connecticut. Not only do we provide primary pediatric care for the community but we are also a major educational site for University of Connecticut medical students and pediatric residents training.

I am submitting this testimony in support of the Reach out and Read Program. As you are undoubtedly aware, Reach out and Read is a program that promotes early childhood literacy skills by giving books to patients at well-child doctor visits and using these books to encourage and foster reading in the home. We use Reach out and Read extensively in our clinic, not only for it's intended purpose of increasing literacy but also as a way of fostering and supporting adult literacy, enhancing our developmental screening, and training the pediatric students and residents who learn at our academic site in the importance of early literacy and it's downstream effects.

Reach out and Read helps us address the serious literacy gap that exists between our varied communities, seen most strikingly when comparing low socio-economic status (SES) areas with the areas of high SES. Our patient population is pulled from the immediate area of Hartford as well as communities in Bloomfield, West Hartford, Manchester and even Middletown. We see a high proportion of Medicaid/Husky and uninsured patients. The need here is great and the response to the books have been overwhelmingly positive. Our ability to educate both the families we serve and the future physicians we teach has been greatly enhanced by this program as it addresses both the literacy gap and sheds light onto normal pediatric development, a skill vital to future caregivers.

Any support the State can provide for this worthy program would definitely benefit it's communities and its future pediatric workforce.

Thank you for your consideration,

Respectfully,

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