



REACH OUT AND READ CONNECTICUT

where great stories begin™

January 27, 2015

Legislative Office Building, Room 1E
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT

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

My name is Meghan Blomberg and I am the Connecticut Regional Program Coordinator for Reach Out and Read. I have come here today to request your support for Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.

Reach Out and Read is delivered at 71 sites across Connecticut that distribute nearly 70,000 new books to almost 40,000 children annually. Reach Out and Read utilizes the relationship and repeated contact that our medical providers have with families to educate them on the importance of reading aloud and difference that it makes developing critical pre-literacy and literacy skills.

Before I began working for Reach out and Read, I was both a Preschool/ Head Start teacher and a Kindergarten teacher. As a teacher, I witnessed first-hand the difference in the pre-literacy skills between the children that had been read to at home and the children who had not. The children that had little or no experience with being read to were usually less excited for story time and most often had difficulty sitting for and focusing on the story. The children that had the experience of being read to would come up to the front for story time, they were the most engaged in the story and could sit and attend while I was reading. They would ask to hear some stories again and again chiming in with the parts they knew. These children were ready to learn because they had the experience of being read to. Research shows that by the age of 3, children that are born into low-income families hear about 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers and that the same children are at the highest risk of reading failure and entering school behind grade level. They are typically 12-14 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills by the time they enter kindergarten and they rarely catch up. Teaching parents to read aloud to their children is the easiest way to close that gap.

In my position as Program Coordinator, I have the opportunity to visit with 48 of our 71 Connecticut Reach Out and Read programs. The most common thing I hear from our providers when I go in, is that the children come in to their appointments looking forward to their new book. These books are many times the only books they have in the home. Recently while waiting to meet with one of our providers, I witnessed a mother and her son leaving their well visit. The little boy was hugging his brand new book and they were excitedly talking about how they would read it as soon as they got home. That moment is a great example of Reach Out and Read at work and every child deserves that experience.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Respectfully,

Meghan Blomberg

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