

House Energy & Environment June 9, 2020 UPON ADJOURNMENT

First Name	Last Name	Position on Bill	Representing	Testimony
Allison	Phipps	For	Self	<p>My 4 year old son has been receiving Imagination Library Books monthly since he was 1. He gets so excited when we get a new book in the mail and we sit down immediately to read it. We read a lot with our son and go to the library when we can to pick out books. But it is not always easy to find time to make it to the library and purchasing books is expensive. Receiving an age appropriate book a month for the past 3 years has really stocked our library and we read and re-read these books often. In light of the recent protest many of my parent friends have been discussing purchasing more books that show diversity in them. Because of the imagination library I already have a great selection of books that show diversity. From the imagination library we have received books in English and Spanish, showing characters who are black, brown, white, male and female. (And of course books with animals and trucks as the main characters too). I have appreciated these books as they show kids of color saying good night, watching the moon, or playing hide and seek. These types of books are important in celebrating our differences but also showing that all kids no matter their gender or race love to do things like resist bedtime and play with friends all the same. Imagination Library has been a wonderful experience for my family. My hope is for all families to has the same access to such quality books.</p>
Becky	Robinson	For	Self	<p>I wanted to take a moment to express how valuable and beloved the Colorado Imagination Library is to my family. We signed my daughter up for it when she was born, 18 month ago. As a new parent, one of the best pieces of advice I have received is if I want to raise a child who loves to read, don't keep books neatly stacked on shelves. Scatter them around house and always have a few in reach. I'm delighted to say that at 18 months, my daughter spends hours a day being read to and flipping though books. She knows where to find them in every room of the house (including the bathroom!).</p> <p>By far, her favorite books have been the ones we received from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. I am not exaggerating when I say my husband and I have memorized the last 6 books we've received, because she asks for them to be read over and over and over!</p> <p>I recommend the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to all my friends and family who also have young children. Unfortunately, many of them live in neighborhoods, even here in Denver, where it is not available. Now more than ever, the need for a service like this exists. With libraries being close for months, money tight for many families, and the desire to shelter our young children from public places like bookstores; the Dolly Parton library is providing an essential service. COVID restrictions aside, I will always think that growing a love of reading and access to books is one of the most essential, generous, and most valuable services we can provide for our children.</p> <p>Please consider making this a statewide program so that all children in Colorado have access to such beautiful, high quality books.</p> <p>Thank you for hearing and considering our request. - The Robinson Family</p>

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Devra	Beldock Roll	For	Self	<p>Hello, My name is Devra Beldock Roll. I live in Littleton and have worked as a school psychologist in Littleton Public Schools for the past 20 years. In my role working with school children and their families, I have seen up close the value of early exposure to books for academic as well as emotional growth.</p> <p>One of the things I love about the Imagination Library program is the way it helps promote equity by providing free books to infants and young children across racial, economic, and rural/urban lines. There is research based evidence that Imagination Library increases literacy by third grade.</p> <p>In terms of emotional health, I am so impressed that Imagination Library does more than mail a free book to families each month. In addition to the book, a note to the parent suggesting meaningful reading time with their child is always included. A caregiver reading to a young child provides an opportunity for physical and emotional closeness and conversation. As a parent and an educator, I have seen how valuable those routines are in building the foundations of confidence and sense of well being that our children need on their road towards successful adulthood.</p> <p>I encourage you to support The Colorado Imagination Library bill as another tool in our effort to build equity in our state and resilience in our youth. Thank you for your time.</p>
Donovan	Cobbins	For	Self	<p>My Name is Donovan Cobbins. I am on the board of Imagination Library of Denver and my 6 year old daughter was fortunate enough to get signed up for this extraordinary book program when she was 1. By merely finding out about the program, my daughter has been able to build a library that I would not have been able to provide for her. We've gotten to the point where she has started reading some of the first books that we received to me. It has been well documented that illiteracy is preventable by providing resources to children. I have never met a person that argued against providing books to children. This extremely simple, efficient program provides a way for children to receive books directly to their house on a monthly basis. It would be amazing and beneficial to society as a whole if we are able to secure funding to give access to this program to every child 0-5 in the state.</p>
Durban	Ripley	For	Self	<p>We have been members of this incredible Program for the last three years. My son is now an avid reader and loves, loves, loves books! For us a new book day from imagination library is an incredible day. When we receive new books we sing and dance and run immediately to the couch to sit down and read the new book. Right now my sons favorite book is called The Night is Yours about a young black girl named Amani who plays hide and seek with her friends. I love having books help my white son navigate racial diversity in our beautiful country, among other important topics like empathy, dealing with emotion, friendships, family, colors, numbers, animal habitats and so much more. We are grateful for this amazing program and wish that every child could be granted the same monthly joy, impactful learning and quality reading cuddles!</p>

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Heidi	Meinig	For	Self	<p>My son is turning 2 this week. He has received so many wonderful books from the Imagination Library. He gets so excited when they come in the mail, and wants me to read it immediately. His favorite book right now is The Mighty Little Excavator which came in the mail a few months ago. He knows which books he has received from the program because he always thanks Dolly at the end of the story. I'm not sure why he started doing this, but it's cute! As a former special education English teacher in DPS, I know this program would be of great value to many families in Colorado. All kids should get to experience the joy of getting a good book in the mail!</p>
Hugh	Balkin	For	Self	<p>I am a Board Member of the Imagination Library of Denver and I support the passage of the Colorado Imagination Library Program.</p> <p>As an attorney, literacy, has defined my career as both a Chief Deputy District Attorney and now the Managing Attorney of a large personal injury law firm.</p> <p>More than 20 years of extensive studies ranging from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, US universities, Governor's Books from Birth program, etc, show that participants in Imagination Library have positive statistical differences than nonparticipants.</p> <p>Globally, studies show that early childhood literacy is an exceptional education multiplier. Those who read at or above grade level perform better in school, learn critical skills at a younger age, show more kindness and empathy to others, continue to read into adulthood, and become better-trained members of the Colorado workforce.</p> <p>This program has the ability to change the trajectory of a child's life, and can be part of the solution to break the cycle of poverty. With 40% Colorado school-age children unable to read at grade level, Imagination Library begins cultivating a love of books at birth.</p> <p>Our formative years craft our desires for knowledge and understanding, they are the time that we can truly expand our minds, it is the time that we learn to stand up for others and how to use our voices to effectuate change in the world. In my line of work, we value critical thinkers and those that can come up with solutions to difficult problems. As lawyers, our solutions come through reading, research, curiosity, and the ability to candidly communicate.</p> <p>Giving the gift of literacy to all children in Colorado doesn't just have a positive effect on that child's life. It affects their future: their ability to succeed in school, opportunity to attend post-secondary or apprenticeship programs, increase in discretionary income for a fuller life. Those children who might not get this gift now have a vehicle to change their futures. Plenty of studies have shown that children who graduate Imagination Library program aren't just kindergarten ready, they test higher in 3rd grade, 5th grade, and 10th grade. We all know that better grades equal better opportunities and this program offers that opportunity to all children in the State of Colorado.</p> <p>What the best attorneys have in common is critical reading and writing skills. We didn't get this skill from attending law school. We've worked on it since before we sat in a classroom. We got it when we were young, when our parents pulled us in their lap and read to us, brought to us a joy of reading and learning that must come when you are a child, or it may never come at all.</p>

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jennifer	lysaught	For	Self	My child has been a part of the Imagination Library program since birth and he is now almost 3 years old. He adores the books we receive and get so exciting receiving the book in the mail. "New Book!" is cheered as he runs around the house. It is a truly exciting moment every single time! We sit down before nap time and bedtime, and often in the middle of the day to read them. I am always impressed with the selection that teach inclusivity, the importance of family, perseverance, and respecting people and their feelings. My son LOVES to read and especially with all of the budget cuts around ECE-3 and ECE-4, I think it is so very important. This program is so special and the time I spend with my son reading means so much to both of us. Making this program accessible statewide to improve literacy rates would no doubt help literacy rates and promote togetherness and a love of reading in general.
Leah	Charney	For	Self	
Sara	Randall	For	Imagination Library of Denver	In-person Testimony
Valerie	Smith	For	Self	<p>My family was a member of the Colorado Imagination library Program from the time we were introduced to the program through my daughter's daycare in 2016 through our move to outside the 80205 zip code earlier this year. I signed my younger son up for the program in 2017 as well. My kids LOVED receiving books every month and recognize Dolly Parton as "the lady who sends the books". When my daughter got older she was able to recognize the name on the label and would proudly announce whose book it was. We read books nightly as a family and our book collection is proudly full of books from Imagination Library. As a full time working mom I really appreciate the variety of books sent and the exposure we get to diverse stories and authors. Just receiving a new book every month re-energizes the kids to hear and request new stories and more books. I often use the books we receive as a base for finding new books from our local library, books by the same author, similar subject matter, etc.</p> <p>We were definitely disappointed to find out we were moving out of a qualifying zip code and I hope that one day the program and other similar early literacy programs can be expanded throughout the state!</p>

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Zoe	Shale	For	Self	<p>As a current subscriber for my three year old son, you might think there would be little value before he is able to read on his own. On the contrary, it is his attachment to books and reading together as a family, that has allowed him to start reading on his own. Does he get every single word right? Of course not. But the fact that he can read ANY words at his young age is partly due to the ability to have so many distinct and appealing books on hand, most from Imagination Library. Not only are they thoughtfully picked out by age, but their content is geared toward relevant topics that children and parents alike need to consider. I am so grateful for the opportunity through this program that has allowed us to partake in the great learning adventure for our kiddo through reading. I am convinced it is one of the reasons he comprehends and knows more every day. Not only that, but he LOVES to be able to get his new book through the mail with HIS name on it. What a way to show belonging and respect to children.</p> <p>We are some of the more lucky families that can supplement with more reading endeavors through library visits and family gifts but some are not able to. It is so important to provide for others more so now than ever, I implore you to give every child the head start they need to thrive by reading. No one knows what will happen with the recent events making at home learning more prominent, possibly longer term. What everyone does know that kids want to learn, thrive at it when given the support to do so. This program does just that. Please support this program so every child gets the start to their future that they deserve.</p>