

Feb. 8, 2024

Cheryl Hooker

Committee member for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Rutland Affiliate.

Chair Campion and Members of the committee, Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am very pleased that Sen. Starr and this committee have chosen to include a Statewide outreach of the Dolly Partn Imagination library in your bill to improve the level of literacy in our schools and our State.

This easily accessed, cost effective program that extends from Cradle to Kindergarten is proven to establish a culture of literacy, not only for our youngest students, but for their families as well. As one survey by a DPIL affiliate found, families enrolled in the program are 4Xs more likely to read to their children (this number goes to 8Xs in low-income families).

We know, as Alison Novak wrote in her Oct 2023 article on literacy in Vermont in VT Digger that “Today, only about half of Vermont third graders read proficiently. Results are far worse for children of color and those with disabilities or living in poverty.”

She went on to say: “The stakes are high. Low literacy is linked to a host of negative effects, including poor health, poverty, and incarceration. And there are less obvious costs. Being unable to read proficiently causes deep hurt and shame.”

I’m new to the Imagination Library having joined the Rutland Affiliate Committee about 1.5 years ago and I’m here with the chair of that committee, so I’ll leave the details to the more experienced witnesses, Executive Director Briggs and local affiliate movers and shakers.

I’ve seen the effects of the program and the joy it brings to the families in the Rutland area and hope we can extend this opportunity to all of our youngest Vermonters.

Thank you again for your work on this issue.

