

Greetings Mr. Chair & committee

My name is Dr Nathan Chomilo and I am a pediatrician and internist who lives and practices in the twin cities. I am also the state Medical Director for Reach Out and Read Minnesota.

Reach Out and Read Minnesota trains physicians and nurse practitioners, to equip parents to be their child's first teacher and pairs that with a developmentally appropriate book at their doctor's visit between the ages of 6 months and 5 years. This model has existed for 30 years and is backed by over a dozen peer-reviewed studies that show us that families served by clinics participating in Reach Out and Read are more likely to read to their children, that children score higher on expressive and receptive language scores and that attendance at well child check ups is increased.

Part of our effectiveness stems from how we leverage the pre-existing healthcare infrastructure. Roughly 90% of children will see a medical provider at least once within their first year while, for comparison, only ~40% of children under the age of 2 are in a licensed day care center. A pediatrician or family medicine doctor is not only a relatively constant presence in the first 3 years of a young child's life but a trusted messenger that parents and caregivers depend on. Which is why interventions that use the healthcare infrastructure and meet families where they are at, like Reach Out and Read MN, are the low hanging fruit that we are currently not reaping in our efforts to address opportunity gaps in early childhood.

Gaps in oral vocabulary have been shown as early as 18-24 months old. There is evidence that children from low socioeconomic households have smaller oral vocabularies than their peers at age 2 and that oral vocabulary at age 2 is a predictor of kindergarten academic performance and behavioral function. Children who aren't read to in that first 1,000 days of life have an increased risk of growing into adults who are illiterate and at risk for worse health outcomes.

Reach Out and Read has had impressive success with a relatively slim staff and budget. We currently reach >40% of all children in MN between the ages of 6 months and 5 years by engaging over 260 clinics and 1,100 providers in >50% of counties in MN. However we are reaching our capacity to not only continue growing but maintain the high level of quality we have established throughout our clinics' programs. A commitment from the state would not only help us with money to expand but it will signal to our current and hopeful future funders that our work not only produces results but is primed for the next level of investment. Private-public partnerships are how we were able to get communities like Fairmont, Northfield and Minneapolis to embrace our model and become Bookend Cities. Where every clinic in the city limits participates in Reach Out and Read at a high level (with Minneapolis becoming the 1st major city and largest city in the country to achieve this distinction). To meet our goal of making Minnesota a Bookend State support from the state will be crucial.

When a parent reads to their child a bond is strengthened. When a child loves reading, they acquire the tools to write their own story. Your support of HF2111 will help ensure that children

and families across our great state have access to these tools. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Nathan T. Chomilo, MD FAAP  
Medical Director | Reach Out and Read Minnesota