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DPIL through the United Way of Lackawanna Wayne and Pike Counties

## Good Morning Chair Schweyer and the House Education Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today regarding the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

I represent Lackawanna County's program, one of the 55 local partners across the commonwealth. We are relatively new, with our launch in 2021. Our program currently serves 2000 children and we've delivered over 20000 books since our start.

Our experience is one of explosive growth. Without advertising we maintain a waiting list of about 400 children. We're now working to secure long term funding to insure our county's children have immediate access. With the support of PA state funds, we'd be able to expand our enrollment, and develop synergies with other area literacy programs and our wonderful library system.

Why Dolly Parton's Imagination Library? So many reasons...

A track record of success, measured by the level of kindergarten preparedness of participants. There are many studies done around the world showing this success, including the study by Center for Community Solutions studying Cuyahoga County in Ohio. They can be found on the research tab of the DPIL website.

Receiving books directly to a child's home, addressed to them, develops pride and a love of reading. Many families lacking transportation, may not be able to take advantage of our Library systems, or afford to shop for new books.

The program fosters snuggle and quiet time with family members away from screens. Those adults who are learning English, can benefit from the time with entry level books too.

Studies show that language skills are developed within the first year of life. Having books arrive at home, gives parents the opportunity to teach verbal sounds, inflections, color words, shapes and so much more.

By having children ready for Kindergarten, area school districts lessen the need for remedial reading programs. Through the Imagination Library, a 10 to 15% reduction in need is not unachievable. This could relieve a financial burden on schools, and help to re-assign resources to promoting reading instead of helping children catch up.

Extrapolating the benefits of reading into the years of higher education, students who are prepared readers are more likely to graduate high school, go onto college and are able to financially provide stability to our communities.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is not the only literacy program available to our children, but its track record is well established, allowing for synergies with our libraries, school districts and area agencies.

One of our goals to work with area literacy programs to develop a clearing house of options to develop the love of reading in our children.

We sincerely hope you'll consider joining the other 22 states that support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. We are certain the benefits for children, especially those with the greatest needs, will far exceed the financial investment you'll make today.