

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2068

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation, February 22, 2022

Title: An act relating to creating the imagination library of Washington program.

Brief Description: Creating the imagination library of Washington program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Children, Youth & Families (originally sponsored by Representatives Stonier, Abbarno, Bronoske, Dolan, Ryu, Santos, Sells, Wylie, Orwall, Rule, Harris-Talley, Wicks, Gilday, Valdez, Bateman, Taylor and Kloba).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/15/22, 89-7.

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/18/22, 2/22/22 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to select a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization physically located in the state to create and operate an Imagination Library of Washington Program, subject to appropriations.
- Specifies the duties of the selected nonprofit organization that include, among others, establishing affiliate programs across the state and contracting with a national nonprofit foundation to provide age-appropriate, high quality books each month to eligible children at no cost to families.
- Directs the selected nonprofit organization to provide an annual report to the Governor and Legislature beginning November 1, 2022.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wilson, C., Chair; Nguyen, Vice Chair; Gildon, Ranking Member;

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Dozier, McCune, Saldaña and Trudeau.

Staff: Kelsey-anne Fung (786-7479)

Background: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. In 1995, Dolly Parton launched the Imagination Library to inspire and foster a love of reading by mailing a specially selected book each month free of charge to children under the age of five in her home county in east Tennessee. The Imagination Library has since grown spanning five countries and is supported through funding shared by the Dollywood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and local community partners in those countries. Local affiliates can be businesses, school districts, small or large organizations, or individuals. The Dollywood Foundation covers overhead and administrative expenses, including negotiating wholesale pricing for the books and coordinating the monthly mailings. Local affiliates and partners are responsible for enrolling children who live in the geographical area, promoting their local programs, and covering the costs of the books and shipping fees. This ensures the books are free to enrolled children and their families, regardless of income. The age-appropriate books are selected by early childhood experts.

Summary of Bill: Subject to appropriations, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), in coordination with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, must select a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization physically located in the state to create and operate an Imagination Library of Washington Program (Program). The selected nonprofit organization is charged with:

- managing the daily operations of the Program;
- establishing affiliate programs across the state;
- advancing and strengthening affiliate programs with the goal of increasing enrollment in those programs;
- developing, promoting, and coordinating a public awareness campaign to make donors aware of the opportunity to donate to affiliate programs and to make the public aware of the opportunity to register children from birth to age five to receive books through the Program; and
- contracting with a national nonprofit foundation that works with local entities to identify children from birth to age five and mail age-appropriate, high quality books each month to those children at no cost to families.

The selected nonprofit organization must pay the national nonprofit foundation an amount that equals 50 percent of the cost to provide books to children enrolled in the Program. Each affiliate program must pay the Program an amount that equals the remaining cost to provide books to enrolled children. Nothing in this Act requires state funding be provided to the selected nonprofit organization or to the Program, however DCYF may seek and accept gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources for the Program and may spend any gifts, grants, or endowments or income from public or private sources on the Program according to their terms.

Beginning November 1, 2022, the nonprofit organization selected to operate the Program must submit an annual report to the Governor and relevant committees of the Legislature with the number of affiliate programs established by the Program, number of children enrolled in each affiliate program, and number of children statewide enrolled in the Program.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill will open the door to children having access to books delivered to their homes, with their names on it, regardless of income. Education is the great leveler in opportunity provider and helping kids learn to read as early and robustly as possible is important. Books are carefully curated and selected by the Dollywood Foundation and Imagination Library. Currently, around 18,000 children from birth to age five are enrolled in the state to receive books from the Imagination Library, and local partners exist in all but seven counties, and this bill will enable it to be expanded statewide. Nothing is more essential or foundational than children's ability to read, and we should not wait until kindergarten to expose children to reading. To start early, kids need to read at home and that requires having access to books, which not all families have. Books in the home increases kindergarten readiness and academic outcomes, changes the home family environment and the trajectory of families, leads to better healthcare outcomes, and fosters connections with libraries and other outlets in the community.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Monica Jurado Stonier, Prime Sponsor; Carolyn Logue, Washington Library Association; Nick Federici, United Ways of the Pacific Northwest; Jim Cooper, United Ways of the Pacific Northwest; Norrine Briggs, Executive Director, The Dollywood Foundation.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.