



# EVERY CHILD NEEDS BOOKS TO READ

## Support equitable access to books and funding to expand Dolly Parton's Imagination Library across Virginia

The **\$4.6 million biennium budget request** will make Imagination Library books available to all children from birth to age 5 in Virginia. This provides a 50% match funding for books and mailing for all local programs, and it also provides support for an in-state team solely dedicated to Imagination Library of Virginia, providing essential resources such as operations, finance, marketing, as well as a secure database and technical support. This funding is critical to ensuring access to monthly books for over 300,000+ children. **We need to put more books in the hands of children and families in Virginia.**

There is a powerful public-private partnership between the Commonwealth of Virginia, The Dollywood Foundation (TDWF), Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), E3: Elevate Early Education (E3) and the Local Program Partners to collectively grow DPIL across Virginia.

The Local Program Partners are at the heart of the program. They raise local funds and enroll children in their coverage areas. It is a shared cost between the Commonwealth, The Dollywood Foundation and private dollars. The state provides 50% and the Local Program Partners contribute 50% of the funds for books and mailings. The team will focus on sustaining the program through increasing private investment. The Dollywood Foundation provides millions annually to provide the infrastructure (book selections, wholesale purchase, printing and centralized book ordering system). The Foundation incurs the program's administrative costs and coordinates fulfillment of monthly books.



**There is a reading crisis in Virginia.** 40% of our students cannot read by third grade - even worse in some communities. There are book deserts throughout Virginia.

## THE SOLUTION

As part of Virginia's comprehensive literacy strategy, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the Virginia Language and Literacy Screener System (VALLSS) and the implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act are working together to help EVERY child read by third grade. **Kids who read, succeed.**



## THE BACKGROUND

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) is a book gifting program that mails age-appropriate, high-quality books to children from birth to age five, regardless of the families income, to simply inspire a love of reading. A child and family enrolled at birth will have a library of over 60 books. The books come with a letter from Dolly, reading tips and activities for families to engage and interact.

E3: Elevate Early Education was selected by The Dollywood Foundation and contracted by the Virginia Department of Education to be the State Program Partner. E3 will oversee the day to day and reach more children and families to ensure equitable access through public-private investment. TDWF, VDOE and E3 will provide an annual outcome report.



## THE HISTORY + FUNDING



During the 2022 Special Session, the General Assembly approved local program expansion dollars for DPIL: **\$481,180** (FY 23 Item 124 HB 30/SB 30)



During the 2024 General Assembly Session, HB1075 passed with strong bipartisan support to set up the structure for a statewide program and the shared funding model with the 50% match and an appropriation: **\$1,157,065** (FY 24-26 Item 124 HB30/SB 30)



**69,654+ children and families (14%) are enrolled** in DPIL out of 462,000 eligible children birth to age five.



There are 77 Local Program Partners. **Over 393,000 of Virginia's early learners are not receiving a book.**



**Support \$4.6m over the biennium to promote, grow and sustain Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Virginia, help local programs, and provide equitable access to books for over 300,000+ children and families.** (Item 124 HB 8 / SB 44)



**Kids Who Read,  
SUCCEED**

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