



State Senator Nickie J. Antonio - District 23

House Homeland Security Committee

December 11, 2024

Sponsor Testimony S.B. 290

Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony for Senate Bill 290 which would create a license plate in support of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio is a 501(c)(3) that serves all 88 counties in the state of Ohio. Affiliated with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the Imagination Library of Ohio was created in partnership with First Lady Fran DeWine in 2019, providing children from birth to age 5 a monthly book, free of cost. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio has provided over 15 million books for Ohio children since its beginning, and a total of 770,294 children are enrolled or have been served through this program.

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library license plate will display an appropriate logo and words selected by representatives of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and approved by the registrar. Residents of Ohio will have the opportunity to buy this special "Dolly" license plate for \$25. The proceeds will benefit Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio and be used to cover operational expenses, including book distribution.

Studies by the Dollywood Foundation show that children who access the Imagination Library are more interested in reading due to receiving new books each month, show more advanced skills than their classmates who do not participate, and are more comfortable reading aloud around others. The Cincinnati Children's Hospital also found that kids who participated in the program saw an over 15% increase in Kindergarten readiness.

The science of reading and The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio was a primary focus in Governor DeWine's State of the State Address given earlier this year. As a parent and former educator, I have been pleased to work with the Governor and First Lady on this legislation.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.