

SENATE THIRD READING  
SB 1183 (Grove)  
As Amended August 22, 2022  
2/3 vote. Urgency

## SUMMARY

Establishes the Statewide Imagination Library Program, under the administration of the State Librarian, to provide age-appropriate books to children age birth through age five who are registered for the program, sent to the child's home on a monthly basis at no cost to families, through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

### Major Provisions

- 1) Creates in the State Treasury a fund to be known as the Imagination Library of California Fund. Requires all moneys deposited in the fund, including state General Fund appropriations, public or private bequeaths, donations, gifts, or grants, and any federal funds, to be continuously appropriated to the California State Library for this purpose.
- 2) Requires moneys from the fund to be allocated to qualified local entities that agree to a dollar-for-dollar match for purposes of the program.
- 3) Requires the State Librarian to coordinate with a nonprofit entity and organized solely to promote and encourage reading by the children of the state, for the purpose of implementing this article.

## COMMENTS

*Dolly Parton Imagination Library programs.* The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a book-gifting program that has been operated by the Dollywood Foundation for over 25 years. The Library maintains a database of book selections and a process that enables local affiliates to register children through the Library's existing system. According to the Library's website, "Each year, the esteemed Blue Ribbon Book Selection Committee, a specially selected panel of early childhood literacy experts, is responsible for reviewing hundreds of potential titles for inclusion in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library." This program essentially functions as follows:

- 1) A non-profit entity or an entity such as a business that partners with a non-profit (a school, library, or any 501(c)3 non-profit) becomes a Dolly Parton affiliate;
- 2) The local affiliates raise matching funds, promote the program, enroll children in Dolly Parton Imagination Library's program (information goes into the national database), and pay \$2.10 per child per month to the national program;
- 3) The Dolly Parton Imagination Library maintains the enrollment database, manages book selection, coordinates monthly book orders and fulfillment, and covers all overhead and administrative expenses for local affiliates;
- 4) Books that have been ordered by enrolled children/families are sent by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library directly to each child's home; and
- 5) The state-level partner provides matching funds and promotes the program statewide.

*Existing Dolly Parton programs in California and other similar programs.* There are 40 Dolly Parton affiliate programs in California, providing approximately 1.8 million free books to children age birth to five years. These programs are operated by school districts and county offices of education, public libraries, community-based non-profit organizations, county First 5 agencies, United Way, and a mayor's office. This is no statewide coordination, outreach, or financial support for these local programs.

It is likely that there are other book-gifting early literacy programs that function similarly to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. This bill would not affect those programs; other programs could continue to exist as they are or they could become an affiliate of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Existing law requires the State Librarian to establish the Reading Initiative Program with funds appropriated for that purpose and with funds received from private sources. The State Librarian is to administer the program, and develop a list of recommended books and develop a method of involving K-12 students in the program. This program was never fully funded or implemented.

The state recently allocated \$50 million to establish the Early Literacy Support Block Grant Program to award funds to the 75 schools with the highest percentage of students in grade three scoring at the lowest achievement standard level on the State Summative English Language Arts assessment (funds go to the school districts that maintain these 75 schools).

*Funding for Program in Budget.* This bill implements funding provided in the budget for the Statewide Imagination Library Program. Specifically, the Budget Act of 2022 (SB 154 (Skinner), Chapter 43, Statutes of 2022) provides \$68.2 million in one-time General Fund to the State Librarian for the Statewide Imagination Library. According to the author's staff, the \$68.2 million will cover administrative costs for the program at the State Library and cover a portion of the cost of books (approximately \$1.05 per book) for five years. In addition, this bill provides for a local match that will generate an additional \$1.05 per book. The Dollywood Foundation is to cover additional program costs. The goal is to enroll 65% of California children age zero to five years old by the end of the five year period.

### **According to the Author**

"It is widely understood that the most significant amount of brain growth occurs in the first five years of a child's life and by age three most of the brain structure has formed. Research shows that young children who are exposed to a variety of linguistic and literacy experiences often do better in school.

Knowing this, select California communities have tried to bring together partners and non-profits in establishing a local Imagination Library affiliate to provide more books to families for preschool children. Though many have been successful, barriers remain, especially those in rural communities that lack the resources to establish an affiliate.

SB 1183 establishes the Imagination Library of California under the leadership of the State Librarian and in partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library aimed at offering a supportive and meaningful education resource for families by providing more books to more children at no direct cost to families regardless of where they live."

**Arguments in Support**

The Dollywood Foundation writes, "Brain science tells us that a baby's brain rapidly grows before entering school with 90% developed by age 4. If we wait till children enter kindergarten for exposure to books and reading – it is too late. The Reading Network in children's brains does not naturally exist; it is built by reading. Reading at home requires books - this is where we can help!

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library inspires family reading, is community -based to drive ownership, and is designed to improve the lives of children at scale.

For over 27 years, The Dollywood Foundation annually contributes millions of dollars to make the Imagination Library available, covering expenses such as administrative, operational, database management, marketing, training, technical assistance and more. Our shared cost model keeps local program costs down to only reduced book, mailing and local administrative expenses.

Simply getting books into the home changes the trajectory of kids, families, and communities. Big impact with low cost, low effort, and low risk. Simple and effective way to make communities better places to live!"

**Arguments in Opposition**

None on file

**FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) One-time General Fund costs of \$68.2 million to implement the program for five years. This includes a portion of the costs of books and annual costs of about \$1.1 million for six staff at the State Library. The state budget includes this funding, as described in Comment 2.
- 2) One-time local matching funds of up to about \$63 million. Matching funds could come from any source, but in the case of local educational agencies, would likely be Proposition 98 General Fund.

Minor and absorbable costs to the State Treasury to establish the Imagination Library of California Fund."

**VOTES****SENATE FLOOR: 38-0-2**

**YES:** Allen, Archuleta, Atkins, Bates, Becker, Borgeas, Bradford, Caballero, Cortese, Dahle, Dodd, Durazo, Eggman, Glazer, Gonzalez, Grove, Hueso, Hurtado, Kamlager, Laird, Leyva, Limón, McGuire, Melendez, Min, Newman, Nielsen, Ochoa Bogh, Pan, Portantino, Roth, Rubio, Skinner, Stern, Umberg, Wieckowski, Wiener, Wilk

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Hertzberg, Jones

**ASM EDUCATION: 6-0-1**

**YES:** O'Donnell, Megan Dahle, Chen, Lee, McCarty, Quirk-Silva

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Bennett

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 16-0-0**

**YES:** Holden, Bigelow, Bryan, Calderon, Arambula, Megan Dahle, Davies, Mike Fong, Fong, Gabriel, Eduardo Garcia, Levine, Quirk, Robert Rivas, Akilah Weber, McCarty

**UPDATED**

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