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Proponent Testimony for HB 2191  
House Committee on Appropriations  
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to offer testimony in support of **HB 2191: Authorizing the children's cabinet to form a 501(c)(3) for fundraising for the Dolly Parton imagination library book gifting program.**

In 2020, the legislature designated the Kansas Children's Cabinet to serve as the state lead for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) book gifting program. The goal of this designation was for the Children's Cabinet to take the lead in growing this program from a patchwork of local 501c3 nonprofit affiliates into a comprehensive, statewide effort. We are nine counties away from achieving that milestone (map attached) and our intention is to reach this goal in 2023, ensuring that any interested Kansas family can participate.

Inspired by her father's inability to read and write, Dolly started her Imagination Library in 1995 for the children within her home county in Tennessee. Today, her program spans five countries and gifts over 1 million free books each month to children around the world. As of January 2023, a total of 199,703,209 books have been gifted by this program, which is an amazing accomplishment. The program is simple: a parent can choose to sign their child(ren) up to receive one free, age-appropriate book each month, mailed to their home, from the time a child is born until their fifth birthday.

In Kansas, we currently have 48,820 children signed up to receive books each month. Last month alone, 1,354 new children received their first book from the program. To continue to grow the program, we need to set up a 501c3 nonprofit entity to allow our Kansas program to become a full partner, secure the nonprofit postage rate, fundraise from the private sector to create a rainy day fund to ensure sustainability, and to provide a charitable tax benefit to donors. Granting the Children's Cabinet the authority to create a 501c3 nonprofit is a necessary step that will help us fulfill the true potential of this worthwhile program.

Dollywood Foundation plays a significant role as the parent organization. They handle the logistics and cover the overhead for the processing the book orders each month. Because of this support, the cost of the program is \$26 per child per year to cover printing and postage. As the statewide program partner, the Children's Cabinet underwrites 50% of the monthly cost

and local affiliates cover the other 50%. By cost sharing through this public-private partnership, we can expand the reach of the program for more children.

HB 2191 authorizes the Children's Cabinet to create a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, identifies the governing board of the Children's Cabinet, the Executive Director of the Children's Cabinet and any additional directors designated by the Children's Cabinet to serve as the board of directors for the nonprofit, ensuring alignment with our program goals. The purpose of the new entity, as defined in the bill, "shall be to receive gifts, donations, grants and other moneys and engage in fundraising projects for the benefit of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library book gifting program to develop, implement, promote and sustain reading by the children of Kansas" thus keeping this narrowly tied to the original legislative intent.

We appreciate your consideration and ask for your support for HB 2191.

Thank you.



