



## 2026 Legislative Session | ILWA Talking Points

### Advocating for the \$2.75 Million Biennium Year-Two Budget Request

#### State Program Info - General

- Imagination Library of Washington (ILWA), the state partner with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, was **established in June 2022 through bipartisan legislation** (House Bill 2068, co-sponsored by State Representatives Monica Stonier and Peter Abbarno) to expand early literacy access to children from birth to age five with the delivery of an age-appropriate monthly book.
- **Imagination Library of Washington's program model is a 50/50 public-private partnership model** - ILWA provides 50% match funding to all local program partners and local communities contribute the remaining 50%. This is the key to sustaining and growing the Imagination Library program. This early literacy program is one of the most cost-effective early learning programs; \$2.60 per book mailed (\$1.30 with 50% state funding match)
- Washington has **43 local program partners** (non-profit organizations) who manage Imagination Library programs in all 39 counties.
- **19% of Washington's total eligible population of children (ages 0-5) are receiving books** every month from the Imagination Library. (over 85,000 children currently enrolled)
- More than **1,380,000 books were mailed to Washington children in 2025** (over 4,755,000 total books mailed since the first local program was established in 2005)
- ILWA launched a **fully Bilingual English/Spanish book collection** in June 2025, allowing families to receive their monthly Imagination Library books in both English and Spanish if desired. This new collection enhances opportunities for dual language learning in the most formative years of a child's life. Currently, more than 4,100 children in WA are enrolled for the Bilingual book collection.
- **2025 Parent/Guardian key survey results** - over 15,000 participating families completed ILWA's annual survey. The goal of conducting this survey is to gather meaningful insights into program impact and outcomes. Key findings include:
  - 91% of respondents believe that participating in the Imagination Library is helping to prepare their child for kindergarten.
  - 80% of respondents have seen an increased interest in books with their child/children.
  - 76% of respondents describe the quality and diversity of the Imagination Library books as excellent
  - 77% of respondents read their Imagination Library books compared to other books in the home.
  - 69% of respondents feel more confident reading to their child/children since participating in the Imagination Library.

## ILWA Funding/Legislative Request Information

- **ILWA was not included in the state operating budget for the 2025-2027 biennium**, leaving thousands of children at risk of losing access to monthly books.
- State champions **OSPI and Superintendent Chris Reykdal stepped forward to allocate \$2 million to ILWA** to sustain monthly book delivery to more than 80,000 children through June 2026.
- **ILWA's 2025–2027 Year-Two Supplemental Funding Request seeks \$2.75 million** to sustain the 50% state match for Imagination Library of Washington, supporting the cost of books and shipping for nearly 100,000 children, with a projected one percent monthly enrollment growth.
- This investment is strongly supported by OSPI, which has once again included it in their legislative priority budget and remains a strong, dedicated champion of the program.
- **Cost breakdown - The total cost is \$2.60 per child per month, made possible through bulk purchasing power via the partnership with The Dollywood Foundation.** This cost is evenly shared, with Imagination Library of Washington providing \$1.30 per child per month (50% match) and local program partners contributing \$1.30 per child per month for children enrolled in their county or counties.

## General Program Attributes/Achievements

- **Early literacy is the single most powerful predictor of academic success.** The Imagination Library is a proven, cost-effective strategy that directly impacts K–12 outcomes and long-term educational achievement.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: Why It Matters
  - **Removes Barriers to Books** - With universal access, the Imagination Library removes cost and availability as obstacles, ensuring that children in every community – rural, urban, or underserved – can build a home library.
  - **Transforms Early Literacy** - By inspiring a love of reading early, the Imagination Library helps children build the skills they need to learn and succeed.
  - **Strengthens Families** - Shared reading time strengthens family bonds and helps parents become their child's first and best teacher.
  - **Proven Impact** - Research shows Imagination Library participants are more likely to enter school prepared, develop stronger language and social skills, and stay on track to graduate high school.
- The Imagination Library has been **widely recognized at the #1 early literacy program in the nation**, with 1 in 7 children enrolled.
- In 2025, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library **celebrated three decades of advancing early literacy, mailing three million books monthly and reaching a historic total of 300 million books distributed** since the program's inception in 1995.

