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**Media Contact:**

Nikki Shearman  
Communications Manager  
Reach Out and Read  
857-636-1343  
nikki.shearman@reachoutandread.org



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**Congress Passes Every Student Succeeds Act, Which Includes Authorization of Pediatric Literacy Promotion**

**Boston, MA; December 9, 2015** Today, the U.S. Senate followed the U.S. House of Representatives in passing a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), titled the Every Student Succeeds Act (S. 1177), by a bipartisan vote of 85-12. The bill, which seeks to ensure the provision of a quality education for all children, passed the U.S. House of Representatives last week by a vote of 359 to 64, and now heads to the President's desk for signature.

The Every Student Succeeds Act critically authorizes funding for literacy programs that target at-risk children by adopting language from the Prescribe a Book Act. This bill builds upon the success of Reach Out and Read, an evidence-based organization that addresses the importance of reaching children in the first years of life by incorporating literacy promotion into pediatric care. Over 5,500 Reach Out and Read medical practices nationwide serve 4.5 million young children annually, half of whom are from low-income families.

We applaud Congress for taking the important step of authorizing pediatric early literacy promotion in federal education policy for the first time. This is fully consistent with a policy statement published by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2014, that recommends literacy guidance from infancy as an essential element of pediatrics, and encourages state and federal support of initiatives like Reach Out and Read.

With unparalleled access to families with young children, Reach Out and Read medical providers give books and guidance about the importance of reading aloud at more than 10 pediatric checkups from infancy. Research shows that our program results in more frequent reading at home, accelerated vocabulary and critical brain stimulation.

U.S. Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA) have tirelessly supported early literacy services for at-risk children, and have been the leading advocates in the Senate for Reach Out and Read for over 15 years.

“Literacy is the foundation for learning. Developing and building these skills begins at home, with parents as the first teachers. That is the basis for the Prescribe a Book Act, and its inclusion in the Every Student Succeeds Act is an important step forward. Helping

young people learn to read is one of the most important things in terms of setting them along the right path and helping them develop the skills they'll need to be successful. This initiative empowers parents to help their kids and provides them with free books to get started," said Senator Reed, the author of the bipartisan Prescribe a Book Act.

"Research shows that reading aloud to children from an early age is vitally important to their development. Programs that get books in the hands of parents and young children have a tremendous impact on kids who are in danger of falling behind, even before they reach school age," Senator Grassley said. "These programs may be the difference in a child's entering school at an equal level as his or her classmates or starting behind from the beginning."

In the House, U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern (D- Worcester) has championed Reach Out and Read for well over a decade, and has visited Reach Out and Read clinics throughout his district, including a recent visit to South County Pediatrics in Webster, to read to children in the waiting room and meet with medical providers. Rep. McGovern said, "Reading to children at an early age is essential to giving them the strong start they need to succeed. All across the country, early literacy programs like Reach Out and Read are helping to make that possible and help them achieve their full potential. I am grateful for the strong bipartisan leadership to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the literacy program that is preparing our students for a brighter future."

In addition, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Representative Katherine Clark (D-Melrose) were instrumental in ensuring support for pediatric early literacy intervention in the Every Student Succeeds Act in their roles on the education committees.

Reach Out and Read Executive Director Brian Gallagher said, "We are thrilled that the Every Student Succeeds Act authorizes federal funding of pediatric early literacy programs like Reach Out and Read, and are very grateful for the support from our champions in Congress who have worked hard to ensure that our program continues and expands to give young children a foundation for success."

### **About Reach Out and Read**

For more than 26 years, Reach Out and Reach has reached millions of children and their parents with its pediatric intervention, ensuring children have high-quality books at home and parents appreciate the value of reading aloud regularly. The body of research validating Reach Out and Read's efficacy is more extensive than any other psychosocial interventions found in general pediatrics. Nationwide, Reach Out and Read's 21,000 medical providers serve 4.5 million children and their families annually at 5,500 pediatric practices, health centers, and hospitals with a focus on those that serve low-income communities. For more information, please visit [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org).