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GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS NAMED TO REACH OUT AND READ NATIONAL HONOR ROLL

State leaders recognized for advancing early literacy and healthy early relationships for more than 150,000 Georgia children through pediatric care

ATLANTA, Ga. (Jan. 8, 2026) – [Reach Out and Read Georgia](#) is proud to announced that a bipartisan group of Georgia legislative champions has been named to the **Reach Out and Read National Honor Roll**, a prestigious recognition celebrating leaders who help advance early literacy, early relational health, and support parents in nurturing strong beginnings for their children.

The honorees, members of the Georgia General Assembly, include Speaker of the House [Jon Burns](#), Reps. [Katie Dempsey](#), [Matt Dubnik](#), [Chris Erwin](#), [Matt Hatchett](#), [Scott Hilton](#), [Todd Jones](#), [Kim Schofield](#), and [Darlene Taylor](#), along with Sens. [Billy Hickman](#), [Freddie Powell Sims](#), and [Blake Tillery](#). Their leadership and advocacy have helped elevate early literacy as a statewide priority and strengthened Georgia's investment in children during their earliest years of development.

"Reach Out and Read Georgia is deeply grateful to these honorees and the entire Georgia General Assembly for their steadfast commitment to Georgia's children and families," said Amy Erickson, Executive Director of Reach Out and Read Georgia.

"These legislators, and Dayle Burns, spouse of House Speaker Jon Burns and a prominent supporter of literacy efforts, have been long-standing champions of early literacy, taking the bold step the last legislative session to affirm that Georgia's investment in children must begin at birth and that pediatricians play a unique role by prescribing books and guiding families in language-rich interactions at every well-child visit. Their investment recognizes what decades of research confirms: Early, evidence-based interventions like Reach Out and Read deliver the strongest returns and align with the science of reading during the critical birth-to-three window of brain development," said Erickson.

Reach Out and Read's model reflects a powerful understanding that the pediatric exam room is one of the earliest and most trusted settings for supporting a child's development. During well-child visits from birth to age 5, clinicians provide families with new, age-appropriate books and model shared-reading practices, showing how the simple act of reading together

can strengthen caregiver-child relationships, build early language skills, and lay the foundation for lifelong learning.

In FY25, Reach Out and Read supported **11.2 million well-child visits nationwide**, reaching **4.8 million children** and distributing **9 million books** to families across the United States, including **more than 150,000 families in Georgia**. This growing pediatric participation, along with increased demand, underscore the importance of continued investment in early literacy initiatives that reach children at the very start of life.

"As pediatric participation surges statewide, we find ourselves at a pivotal inflection point where investments in early literacy matter more than ever. Our legislators have the influence — and have demonstrated the courage — to stand as true champions of Georgia's future," Erickson said.

"Pediatricians across our state are eager and prepared to implement the Reach Out and Read evidence-based intervention, changing a child's trajectory beginning in the very first days of life. We encourage constituents to thank these leaders for their vision and investment, and to stand boldly with us as we seek increased support so that every child in Georgia can benefit from Reach Out and Read. Together, we will no longer accept decades of stagnant reading outcomes — we will invest early and often, celebrate those who lead with purpose, and move the needle for Georgia's children."

Honor Roll members are individually nominated by Reach Out and Read staff and medical leaders. **Reach Out and Read Georgia will formally present the Honor Roll awards on Jan. 27 at the Georgia General Assembly.**

To learn more about Reach Out and Read New Georgia and its impact visit [ReachOutandRead/Georgia](https://www.readoutandreadgeorgia.org).

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About Reach Out and Read: As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, Reach Out and Read leverages the near-universal reach of the pediatric well-child visit to support caregivers in fostering healthy relationships with their young children through shared reading. In FY25, Reach Out and Read served more than 4.8 million children and provided 9 million free books across 11.2 million well-child visits. Around 70 percent of the children Reach Out and Read serves are from low-income families. The only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read serves children in every state across the U.S.