

# THE LIBRARY THAT DOLLY BUILT



SOUTH

JANUARY 2024

QofM

Question of the Month

## ***“Readin’ from Nine Birth to Five, What a Way to Support Early Learnin’: What states have implemented a statewide expansion of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library?”***

Amongst all the musical icons and treasures across the South, none may have impacted educational opportunities and access more than the one-and-only Dolly Parton. Beloved for her iconic decades-long singing, songwriting, and acting career, there is another area where Ms. Parton is perhaps more respected – her influential work to improve early childhood literacy and access to high-quality books via her [Imagination Library](#).

With this Southern staple being feted globally in celebration of her 78th birthday this month, \*millions of children and families across the globe will also be celebrating her birthday in an even more

meaningful way by reading the free books sent directly to their homes.

Founded in 1995, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library was launched as a vehicle to improve access to books and early reading opportunities for children in Eastern Tennessee before expanding worldwide in the following decades. The program’s vision is to create a love of reading in young children and their families – particularly those of preschool age – by providing each child with a specially selected book every month. The program mails these quality and age-appropriate books directly to kids’ homes to ensure all children can access the world of imagination via books – regardless of family income or geographic barriers.



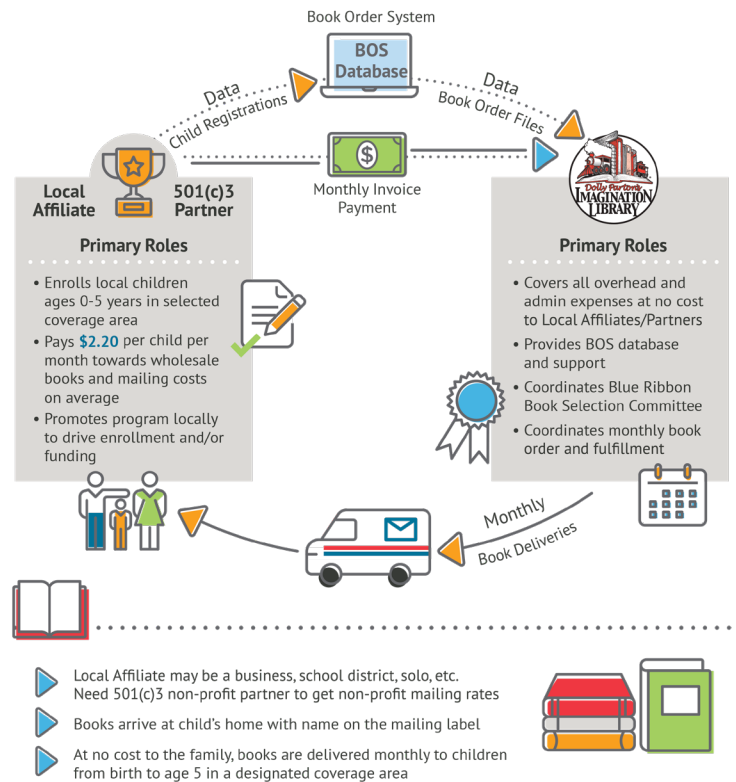
\*Likewise, another iconic Southern staple, CSG South’s annual [Southern Legislative Conference](#), will also be celebrating its 78th year in 2024.

Each month, the program sends more than 1 million books to children worldwide, and enrollment in the program has blossomed, with nearly one in ten children in the United States receiving books from the Imagination Library. More recently, states have taken an interest in better supporting the program and established statewide implementation - beginning with Tennessee in 2004.



## How It Works

*In the United States*

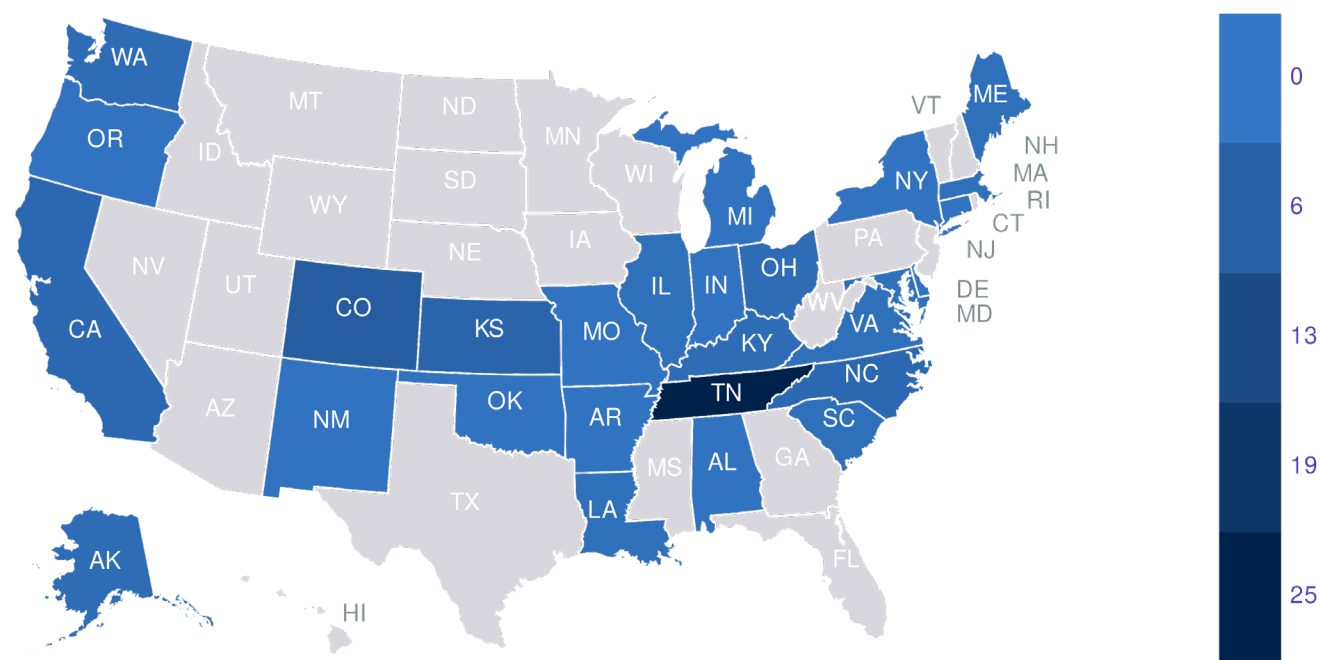


## Timeline of Statewide Expansion of the Imagination Library

2004	2017	2020	2021	2022	2023
Tennessee	North Carolina	Ohio Oklahoma Colorado Delaware	West Virginia Kansas Kentucky	Washington California	Arkansas Montana Alabama Indiana Louisiana Missouri Illinois Maine

Since 2010, more than half of the states have enacted legislation funding, recognizing, or expanding upon Imagination Library funding - including Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Virginia in the CSG South region. It should come as no surprise that the

Volunteer State leads the way, as it enacted more than 30 percent of the 83 total bills signed into law nationwide. With these bipartisan measures seeing near-universal support, lawmakers have worked hard to continue Dolly’s legacy of all giving and no taking.



Source: Author’s visualization of data from Quorum, <https://www.quorum.uset/external/jfvtGYCcaMeryPNBcSTA> (2023).

Comparison of Enacted Imagination Library Laws in the South			
State	Measure (Year)	Summary	Appropriation Amount
Alabama	<a href="#">Senate Bill 88 (2023)</a>	Omnibus Education Trust Fund appropriations bill allocated more than \$1 million in funds - via its Social Services Program - to support the Imagination Library’s statewide efforts.	\$1,831,996 (FY 2023-2024)
Arkansas	<a href="#">Senate Bill 416 (2023)</a>	Established a state Imagination Library program directed to provide one age-appropriate book to each child aged from birth to five years of age in the state; Authorized state to match - up to 50 percent - any local funds used to participate in the program; Created a fund for statewide expansion of the Imagination Library for the deposit of grants, gifts, or donations, and other funds to support program.	-
Kentucky	<a href="#">House Bill 192 (2021)</a>	Omnibus funding bill that appropriated funding to the Imagination Library.	\$800,000 (FY 2021-2022)
	<a href="#">House Bill 1 (2022)</a>	Two-year appropriations measure that designated nearly \$4 million in funds to continue implementation of the Imagination Library program statewide.	\$1,400,000 (FY 2022-2023) \$2,500,000 (FY 2023-2024)

## Comparison of Enacted Imagination Library Laws in the South *(continued)*

State	Measure (Year)	Summary	Appropriation Amount
Kentucky	<a href="#">Senate Bill 164 (2022)</a>	Established the Imagination Library of Kentucky program under the authority of the state Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, providing one free book to all children birth to five years of age in the state.	-
Louisiana	<a href="#">House Bill 412 (2023)</a>	Established a state Imagination Library program governed by the Louisiana Educational Television Authority.	-
	<a href="#">House Bill 550 (2023)</a>	Appropriated State General Fund monies to stand up the statewide program contingent upon the passage of House Bill 412 (2023).	\$2,500,000 (FY 2023-2023)
Missouri	<a href="#">Senate Bill 681 (2023)</a>	Created the Imagination Library of Missouri under the authority of the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and required each school district to provide one book a month to each eligible child from birth to age five. It also instills annual funding requirements of at least \$2.5 million to fund the program.	\$2,500,000 (FY 2023-2024)
North Carolina	<a href="#">Senate Bill 257 (2017)</a>	Directed funds appropriated to the state Department of Health and Human Services be used by the North Carolina Partnership for Children to increase access to the Imagination Library and allows the partnership to use up to 2 percent of funds for program evaluation.	-
	<a href="#">Senate Bill 99 (2018)</a>	Clarified prior bill to limit funds for statewide program evaluation to 1 percent.	-
	<a href="#">Senate Bill 105 (2021)</a>	Reallocated a to-be-determined portion of the North Carolina Partnership for Children funding to continue implementing the Imagination Library program for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2021-2023.	-
	<a href="#">House Bill 259 (2023)</a>	Reallocated a to-be-determined portion of the North Carolina Partnership for Children funding to continue implementing the Imagination Library program for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2023-2025.	-
Oklahoma	<a href="#">Senate Bill 1803 (2020)</a>	Established a statewide framework for the State Department of Education to implement the Oklahoma Imagination Library Program, funded 50 percent by private funds and 50 percent by appropriated funds.	\$2,500,000 <sup>1</sup>
Tennessee	<a href="#">Senate Bill 2275 (2005)</a>	Implemented the statewide Governor's Books from Birth Fund and authorized the fund to partner with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.	-
	<a href="#">House Bill 2348 (2014)</a>	Prohibited the intentional destruction of books intended to be delivered to children enrolled in the state Imagination Library program and required any individuals who come into possession of such books to make every effort to deliver them to the intended recipient or relevant education program.	-
	<a href="#">Senate Bill 142 (2023)</a>	Created a new specialty license plate honoring Dolly Parton with funding used exclusively to support the promotion of childhood literacy through the Imagine Library program and the Dollywood Foundation.	-
Virginia	<a href="#">House Bill 30 (2022)</a>	A supplemental appropriations bill included more than \$1.6 million in funding to support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library for Kids.	\$481,180 (FY 2023) \$1,157,065 (FY 2024)

<sup>1</sup>This amount, funding the program through the end of Fiscal Year 2024, is comprised of federal pandemic relief funds allocated to the Oklahoma State Department of Education for learning recovery and acceleration.