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SENATOR BERTA GARDNER
SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER
Senate District 1

SCR 5 Alaska Reads Day

Sponsor Statement

The Alaska Reads Day Resolution, SCR 5, creates awareness for early literacy in Alaska and encourages action on behalf of public and private entities, as well as local teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in our children's education. In our current fiscal crisis, it is vital that we look to ways to cut government costs, while also being mindful of ways to diversify and grow our economy. Early childhood literacy is one issue that covers both priorities.

The state of Alaska has struggled with low reading proficiency rates for its students. This issue has social, economic, and international implications. Poor reading proficiency in the 3rd grade is indicative of increased costs to the state through dependence on social services and costs of incarceration, and of an inadequately prepared workforce with poor implications for our economy and our national security.

Specialists agree that early literacy is vital for youth to achieve academic success and independence later in life. Students who do not read proficiently by the third grade are set up to fail in subsequent grades, as curriculum from this point onward assumes reading proficiency. Additionally, research shows that the greater exposure a child has to language, the more successful they will be later in life.

Similar resolutions have passed in California, Indiana, and on the Federal level. Passing the Alaska Reads Day legislation would encourage increased language exposure to our young people and help to create a culture of early literacy in our state. At no cost to the state, we can promote the importance of early literacy and urge our communities to address this problem together, and work towards a less expensive, more productive future.

Please contact Jacob Tatum with any questions: Jacob.Tatum@akleg.gov, (907) 465-4930.