

March 24, 2017

Dear Representative Kawasaki,

**thread**, Alaska's Child Care Resource and Referral Network strongly supports expanding quality early care and learning services, including Preschool. This letter is in support of HB52.

Research demonstrates that the most formative years of brain development come well before a child starts kindergarten. Early and sustained participation in quality PreK and early learning settings leads to more children graduating high school, higher earning rates for parents and for the children once grown, reduced public spending on remedial education and services, and lower incarceration rates.

Alaska's state-funded PreK programs currently serve only 3% of Alaska's preschool population. Alaska's children participating in PreK are doing well. A report from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Learning, January 2016, indicated an increase in children's cognitive, language arts and math scores as a result of their enrollment in State funded PreK. These results are consistent with the data from the start of the State's investment in the PreK pilot since FY12. We have demonstrated that Pre- K works, now we need to expand the services so that they are available to more children and families.

**thread** encourages any PreK services in Alaska be provided in communities allowing for a diverse delivery system. We suggest that HB52 build off of the existing PreK grant process and allow for service delivery in ways that best meet individual community needs. **thread** suggests HB 52 include:

- A definition of PreK to include delivery through school districts, Head Start, private community based child care, and home visiting services.
- An expansion of the existing PreK grant program allowing for a diverse delivery system, family engagement and Technical Assistance support from DEED.
- Use of the Early Learning Guidelines and Alaska Quality Improvement Standards as outlined by Learn & Grow. (In lieu of the current language referencing a model curriculum).

Approximately 10,000 children each year complete the Alaska Kindergarten Developmental Profile, used to assess a child's readiness for kindergarten, while Alaska's state funded PreK currently only supports 300 spaces for 4 year olds. This equates to only 3% of the total 3 & 4 year old population. Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development reports that of the 10,000 children entering Kindergarten, only 38% of these young children start school with all the skills experts say they need to succeed. Currently 7,000 (6%) children repeat a grade each year in Alaska costing Alaskans \$11.5 million.

Expanding PreK programs will have long-term impact on Alaska's economic security. The 2015 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) average reading scores for Alaska's 4th grade children were lower than the average scores of 4th graders in 41 other states. 54% percent of 4th graders who are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch read below grade level and 66% of Alaska Native 4th grade students read below grade level. Alaska can't afford to continue the practice of addressing education gaps in the teen and adult years.

Quality early learning programs like PreK should and need to be a part of Alaska's economic infrastructure as a means of creating a literate and prepared workforce. We can invest now or pay more later. Kids without access to quality PreK/ early care and learning programs are up to 39% more likely to go to prison. The cost to incarcerate someone is \$40k-\$50k vs. \$6,200 per child for PreK per year. The evidence is clear: high quality PreK programs are among the most cost-effective interventions with a long-term pay-off.

Sincerely,



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CC: Representative Fansler  
Representative Tuck

## **Olivia Garrett**

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**From:** Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen <lovegrn@alaska.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2017 4:16 PM  
**To:** Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Harriet Drummond  
**Subject:** HB 52 Early Education bill

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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I support HB 52 on early education. As you are aware, investment in early education gives children a good foundation for future years and creates future savings for our state government. I hope to see this bill pass the Education Committee and the full legislature.

Thanks for your time,

Cheryl Lovegreen