



Representative Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

District 9 Fairbanks

House Bill 154 Sponsor Statement

Alaska remains one of the only states that do not provide pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) education to its children on a statewide basis. HB 154 seeks to add Alaska to the ranks of states that recognize that children benefit from early education. Children who participate in early education programs earn more money as adults, enter the job market in much larger numbers, obtain college education in higher numbers, remain off of public assistance and are more likely to stay out of jail.

Alaska has a responsibility to provide the best education possible for its children. Currently, outside of few school district classrooms, the state only provides pre-K education through Head Start programs and through the Best Beginnings partnership. Head Start is underfunded and only available to the poorest students. Due to underfunding, the Alaska Head Start Association estimates that more than 50% of the children who qualify cannot receive Head Start education. Head Start has consistently lagged far behind its need. Providing early public education opportunities is a crucial stepping stone to brightening the future of the young Alaskans.

Extensive research shows that a child's intellectual development is especially important before age six. A study by the National Institute for Early Education research in 2004 found that children who attended state-funded pre-kindergarten programs demonstrated improvements in vocabulary 31% greater than those who did not participate, and 44% greater in math. Young children who receive high quality early education do better in school academically and are more likely to stay in school, graduate, and go on to attend college.

The beneficial impact of early education also extends to the economy with multiple studies showing that funds invested in early education pay dividends in the long run. Every dollar invested in high quality pre-kindergarten programs saves Alaskans from paying for remedial and special education and public assistance. An ongoing study of 40-year old adults in Michigan who participated in the 1962 Perry Pre-Preschool Project found that adults with pre-K were more likely to be employed and earned 33 percent higher average income than their peers who did not have state funded early education.

Additionally, a study prepared for the University of Alaska Southeast, states that 87% of Alaska residents think it is important for state government to provide financial support for early education and child care.

In Juneau • State Capitol Juneau, Alaska 99801

In Fairbanks • 1292 Sadler Way Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Juneau • (907) 465-3466 • Fax (907) 465-2937 • **Fairbanks** • (907) 456-7423 • Fax (907) 451-9293

Email: Representative_Scott_Kawasaki@legis.state.ak.us