

KODIAK LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME:

Therap March

REPRESENTING:

Kodiak Community

BILL#/ SUBJECT:

Vouchers

COMMITTEE &

HEARING DATE:

2/3/14SDR-9

~~I am not going to write this
because I am not a teacher~~

Vouchers are not the answer -

Please take time to study

the real reason kids struggle

in school! We all need to

get on the same page to

help our kids.

I am not in favor of vouchers for the following reasons:

1. We often turn to our founding fathers for reference when we discuss constitutional issues. Jefferson is known for his proposal for public education. He opposed providing children in public schools religious texts, since he believed the children heavily would be influenced by adults other than their parents in religious matters. He supported secular education-keeping the important aspect of religion in the hands of the parent. However, Jefferson was in favor of showing children that happiness does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed them, but is always the result of a good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits. Public education does just that. It provides an atmosphere of ethical treatment to all, while pursuing academic standards on which to build a career.
2. What is the real cost of having a good public education? This excellent question was brought up in an Anchorage Daily News article by Diane Hirshberg and Alexandra Hill. So often calculating the cost of education is clouded by money not directly spent on instructing a child. Adding to this is the additional supports needed by children who need accelerated growth. Some children come into school already reading, some do not. Some children leave a well organized home that meets the primary needs of safety, and wellness (both emotional and physical). Public schools are a mirror of our society. It is the place where children not only learn academics, but how to work as a functioning citizen in a community. Let's take the time to understand what the real cost of having an excellent public educational system is! It will pay off in the long run.
3. Julia O'Malley's article in this past Sunday's Anchorage News paper compares schools in wealthy and less wealthy neighborhoods. She states, "Take the Anchorage Hillside. A recent state study found that the Hillside is the fastest-growing part of town, having tripled in population since 1980. Roughly 30,000 people now consider themselves Hillsiders. Sixty percent of those households make more than \$100,000 a year. The only other neighborhood that wealthy is Turnagain. Hillside schools are good. Look at their scores. At South High, for example, 64 percent of female students are considered advanced in reading. Now look at East Anchorage, a neighborhood with large pockets of poor families with children. In Mountain View, only 31 percent of households have an income above \$50,000. In Russian Jack, 49 percent of households make more than \$50,000, 16 percent make more than \$100,000. Reading scores for girls at East High, which those neighborhoods feed? Only 33 percent are considered advanced. The picture in elementary schools is even starker. Now expand the pattern statewide. Parts of rural Alaska have poverty rates near 30 percent. Few places in the country are higher. Where poverty is high in Alaska, students struggle more." Her article speaks to the heart of educating the masses in public education. Children must have their primary needs met before they can achieve academically. Maslow, a psychologist I studied during my education stated that primary needs are being fed, being safe, and being emotionally available to learn. We need to look further at how we are providing basic needs to our children.

Finland has done this and they are considered one of the premier educational systems in the world.

Let's not drain more money from our public schools to try some new experiment to help children succeed. Vouchers have been tried in Wisconsin and the academic results with children who come from homes at poverty levels demonstrated little or less than satisfactory results. This comes from a legislative report in which our own Senator, Gary Stevens, research on. Instead, let's take the time to improve our educational system from the bottom up. If we all come together for a common goal, we can provide a pathway for great achievement.