

March 2015

Representative Wes Keller  
State Capitol Room #403  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Keller,

My name is Dr. Ruth Dukoff, Medical Director for North Star Behavioral Health System and a practicing provider for children and adolescents in acute care as well as the DeBarr Residential Treatment Center. The purpose of this correspondence is to request your support for Education Funding Equality for Children with Mental Illness HB102. As you can imagine, when a family comes to the point that a child needs intensive, residential mental health treatment, it is a very stressful time with emotions running high. The last thing that a child or family needs during this time of crisis is a disruption to their educational services. School is one of the most consistent parts of a child's day and they need to have equitable access so that when they transition back home they are in line academically and can matriculate to the next grade level.

I wish to go on record for supporting this legislation as it will:

- Increase the educational opportunities and measurable outcomes for children with mental illness so that they can successfully transition back to their traditional school after receiving intensive and sometimes lifesaving mental health treatment
- Require school districts to send a portion of funding that would normally be a part of the funding formula for the school days the child is in attendance
- Allow the licensed facility to deliver appropriate educational and related services provided by licensed teachers and credentialed service providers to the student while the student is admitted to the facility
- Allow for a more comprehensive continuum of care by individualizing each student's academic plan to complement their therapeutic treatment goals
- Provide the state real-time data that will assist the state with meeting the needs of other special populations such as students residing in rural villages
- Increase the length of time students spend in school learning and track measurable outcomes to be reviewed by state stakeholders

I ask you to support HB102 as it will improve the delivery of educational services to the children with severe mental illness and allow them the same educational opportunities as their peers.

Respectfully Yours,



Cc: Representative Lora Reinbold, Representative Jim Colver, Representative Paul Seaton, Representative Liz Vazquez, Representative Harriet Drummond, Representative Jonathan Kriess-Tomkins