

## Darrell Breese

---

**From:** Anna White <annaw@searhc.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 27, 2015 3:54 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings, Parents As Teachers, and Pre-K

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

My name is Anna J. White, I am a parent and Nurtition Educator for the WIC Program. Please reinstate full funding for Best Beginnings, Parents As Teachers, and Pre-K. These programs are important to our community, our communities young children, and young families. My own children love the books that we receive from the imagination library. Even though my oldest has now graduated from the program he continues to love books! When I first became a parent I don't think I would have thought to run out and buy my new baby a book, but felt more encouraged every time a book showed up in my mail box to open it and read it immediately! As my children grew they became more and more excited every time a book showed up. At the WIC office I keep the registration forms and encourage parents to sign up if they haven't already! Give them the web address to AYESC to find out about all the great programs they offer. I attended several parenting classes as well through AYESC services they offer. You may already know Juneau is full of very young parents and without these programs can only lead to more problems for Juneau's children when they start school.

--  
Anna White  
WIC Nutrition Educator, CLC  
SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium  
3245 Hospital Drive  
Juneau Alaska 99801  
907-463-4099

--  
This e-mail and any files transmitted with it are confidential and are intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. This communication may contain material protected by evidentiary privileges including the physician-patient privilege, psychotherapist-patient privilege, attorney-client privilege and federal privacy laws. If you are not the intended recipient or the individual responsible for delivering the e-mail to the intended recipient, please be advised that you have received this e-mail in error and that any use, dissemination, forwarding, printing, or copying of this e-mail is strictly prohibited. If you have received this e-mail in error, please immediately notify the sender by replying to this message. You may also notify SEARHC by telephone at (907) 966-8418. You will be reimbursed for reasonable costs incurred in notifying us.

**From:** [Eileen Floyd](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Unable to make the rally on Saturday  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 4:17:55 PM

---

From a concerned Alaskan.

From: <[kayleebug14@aol.com](mailto:kayleebug14@aol.com)>  
Date: Thursday, February 26, 2015 at 10:46 PM  
To: Laura Cisneros <[lcisneros@bestbeginningsalaska.org](mailto:lcisneros@bestbeginningsalaska.org)>  
Subject: Unable to make the rally on Saturday

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Kaylee Jenkins. I am a Registered Nurse and mother to an incredible 14 month old boy. I received this email and am saddened upon hearing that Best Beginnings is in danger of losing funding for the Imagination Library. I unfortunately have to work on Saturday all day and am unable to attend this meeting. I wanted to convey via email my opinions on this program in hopes that you can share this with the gathering at the Library on Saturday.

I signed up for the Imagination Library when I was in the hospital after having my son. I kept thinking to myself that there must be some sort of a "catch." There was no way that my child could receive books every month FOR FREE. Shipping, a few dollars a month, hidden fees, I was not sure how this was possible. In doing research I found out more about your wonderful program. My son LOVES reading the books provided by Imagination Library, and we look forward to getting our monthly book in the mail. BY FAR his favorite book to read is Little Loon and Papa from 10-11 months ago. He loves reading this book. We read it every day. He makes some of the Loon sounds with me, and he anticipates upcoming pages. These books provided have captivated my son on so many levels, and we enjoy reading together. Over the past few months, I catch my son in his room, by himself, leafing through books and "cooing" aka reading to himself. I know that it is because of your program. Thank you for giving my son the gift of reading and the convenience to be able to receive a book every month to our own front doorstep. I know that because of your program, he is going to have a head start in school, and that your program will have lifelong rewards. If there is anything I can do to help with getting the funding for Best Beginnings, I would be glad to do!

Kaylee Jenkins

**From:** [Lauren Sill](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early childhood education  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 9:35:45 PM

---

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,  
My family is part of the Parents as Teachers program and we have signed up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, funded through Best Beginnings. The Parents as Teachers program has been a great experience for my 3 year old as well as my 6 month old. The program helped my husband and I during the early months and year of our children's life. I know there is not enough funding for all the programs the state supports, however early learning is not a good area to cut. These kids are the future leaders of the state and the importance of early childhood education cannot be overstated. Investing in the future of our state makes the most sense with a limited budget. I urge you not to cut funding to these important programs.

Sincerely,  
Lauren Sill

**From:** Patty Meritt  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Protect early childhood education programs  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 5:06:53 PM

---

I was listening to an administrator from the local hospital talk last week about the serious shortage of mental health services for youth in Fairbanks. He was talking about the need for intervention and remedial services and how much funding is needed to meet the critical shortage of services.

I couldn't help but think how much less would be needed if we would invest in prevention in the early years. It is appalling that the legislature is considering cuts to early education (pre-k services, Best Beginnings & Parents as Teachers) which could prevent some of these remedial services later. Early care is already woefully under funded in AK. It seems to always be one of the first areas proposed for cuts - Very short sighted. Please re-think the importance of these services to young children. How much money is going to support timber? Fish? Mining? Shouldn't our young and vulnerable children be at least as protected and supported as these?

--

Patty Meritt  
620 Eton blvd  
Fairbanks, AK 99709  
907 474-0841



**From:** Nelson, Sabrina M (DNR)  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please continue funding for the PAT and Best Beginnings programs  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 8:39:09 AM

---

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for taking the time to consider the importance of the Parents As Teacher's program (PAT) and programs like Best Beginnings including the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, these programs have made a huge difference in the life of my family. I am a full-time working mother that is also trying to earn a degree through online attendance with the University of Alaska Southeast. I value education and with the limited amount of time I have to juggle all these priorities, these programs have been a phenomenal asset to our everyday lives. I have two boys, Rylan, 3 1/2 years old, and Osias, 1 year old.

We joined the PAT program within the first two months of Rylan's life and continued until he aged out of the program. When I first joined the program I was an uneducated and unconfident mess. What can I say, I was a new parent. I wondered how the hospital could let me walk out their front door entrusting me with a baby. At almost 30, I didn't know the first thing about infants; it had been too long since I last was a babysitter in high school and even then it wasn't watching a newborn. I was fearful, struggling with the reality of responsibility cradled in my arms. It was beyond comprehension what to do next with this little life I brought into this world. To put it bluntly, I needed guidance and support. Emily, my PAT advisor, was there for us. I had questions, a lot of questions. I wanted to know about my child, I wanted to encourage his development, I wanted to know about what support and resources were available to us, guidance on childcare, information about first foods, potty training, what developmental milestones were next, how to communicate with him before his verbal skills developed, what activities were around town; the list was always growing.

I looked forward to the home visits, sharing precious time with a knowledgeable educator that felt like an extension of my family. The visits were structured and informative; educational white papers, the monthly newsletter, developmental screenings, activities (the part producing the most memorable moments), a new book, and discussion about what I wanted to know about next. Through these regular visits I developed confidence in myself to make decisions about my child's future, if I didn't know the answer who to contact to direct me to how to find the answer, how important reading together is and so much more. The relationship developed thru the support of Emily built confidence and trust in myself as a parent and as an educator of my own children. Emily and I shared several moments with each of my children (developmental milestones) that we explored and celebrated.

Through the monthly parties where other families gathered at various locations, bonds with other families were created and are currently sustained. It was a wonderful way to network with other parents that you can relate to because they are experiencing the same things you are. The snacks were delightful and our favorite

## Darrell Breese

---

**From:** Jenni Lefing <jlefig@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 02, 2015 2:08 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please reinstate funding for early learning programs- Juneau Resident

Dear House Finance Committee Members,

I am a Juneau resident and parent to a 10-month old baby boy. I strongly urge you to reinstate funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and the Alaska Pre-K program.

As first-time parents and participants in the Juneau Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, my husband and I have benefited greatly from the support and guidance provided to us. Through PAT, we have increased our knowledge of our child's development, improved our parenting practices, become connected to community resources, and are more confident in our parenting skills. I know that this can only positively impact our son and those he will engage with throughout his life.

Research shows that supporting early learning efforts, such as Parents as Teachers, leads to greater student success, and reduced risk behaviors. Investing in families with young children is crucial to ensure the success of Alaska's early learners.

I am deeply concerned about the impacts your cuts will have on my family as well as my Alaska neighbors. Investing in early learning is the smartest thing you can do, especially in these tight budget times.

Please reconsider the drastic cuts and reinstate funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and the Alaska Pre-K program.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jenni Lefing  
434 7th St.  
Juneau, AK 99801  
cell: 907-957-3587  
[jlefig@gmail.com](mailto:jlefig@gmail.com)

**Darrell Breese**

---

**From:** Ritter, Kathryn <kathryn.ritter@juneauschools.org>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 28, 2015 3:35 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please support early learning

My name is Katy Ritter, and I am a 4th grade teacher at Gastineau School, and also a parent of two young children, ages 4 and 2. I urge you reinstate full funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and Pre-Kindergarten programs. From my experience as an elementary school teacher, I see the HUGE discrepancy between children who grow up in a literate, print-rich environment, and those who do not. Children who may not otherwise have opportunities for preschool and building their home library with a beautiful selection of 60 books, will now start kindergarten (or possibly first grade) without support from these essential early learning programs, and will be at a huge disadvantage academically. The gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' will widen.

It is your responsibility to support our state's youngest citizens, who cannot advocate for themselves.

Respectfully,

Katy Ritter  
Gastineau School  
#796-5075  
[kathryn.ritter@juneauschools.org](mailto:kathryn.ritter@juneauschools.org)

## Darrell Breese

---

**From:** Talea Hayes <taleahayes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 28, 2015 3:57 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Protect Young Children and Families!

House Finance Committee Members,

As a Juneau resident and new parent, I am devastated to see the recent cuts to Best Beginnings, Parents As Teachers, and Pre-K. These programs are essential to our state's efforts to support parents, and help our children approach school and life with the skills they will need to succeed. These cuts are pointed directly at Alaska's most vulnerable young children and their families.

Having an education in Child Development, I am aware of the HUGE VALUE of early learning, and the lasting effect that it has on one's life. The first 5 years of a child's life are the most influential in the development of the brain. Early childhood education programs help to develop the child's cognitive (academic), social and emotional development. It has been proven that the quality of early childhood development heavily influences health, economic, and asocial outcomes for individuals and society at large.

We recently moved back to Alaska after having our son, because we believe it is a wonderful place to be a child. I am disappointed to see that the state is choosing to make cuts, instead of investing in our children, and future.

Whether or not young children and their families in Alaska will reach their potential is largely dependent on support such as these programs, especially in tight budget times. And so, I respectfully ask that you reinstate full funding for these important early learning programs.

Sincerely,

Talea Kellar

**From:** Amie Ericksen  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Funding Re: HB 72 & 73  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 4:41:55 PM

---

As a member of a small community on Prince of Wales Island, I am writing in to voice my opinion on keeping the funding intact for internet access programs and the funding of broadband in our libraries. This access and the programs it supports has become vital to the success of so many people in our community. Not everyone has the ability to have internet access in their home. Even with internet access, not everyone is able to use this powerful engine to gain educational tools, employability tools, etc., on their own. What the teleconferencing capabilities of our local library actual is for rural Alaskans is a huge window to the rest of the world; one that is closed to many Alaskans unable to travel beyond their isolated community. Keep funding for literacy, keep funding for distance-education courses, keep funding for early-childhood intervention, keep funding for growth, progress and prosperity. All of this is accomplished by funding our libraries!

Thank you for your careful consideration,  
Amie Ericksen

**From:** Rob Palmer  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Early childhood education  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 3:33:33 PM

---

Dear Finance Committee,

I urge you to reconsider cutting funds for early childhood education in Alaska. While I understand that Alaska is facing a very difficult budget shortfall and that funds must be cut, I would like you consider the future of our state and country before cutting early childhood education.

While we face financial hardships today, we must also be looking towards building a better future. Our children are that future and it is vitally important that they receive a great education. After all, they will be the ones deciding important things about our own future as we age! Numerous studies have shown that the first three years of our lives are crucial for brain development. The major difference between brain development in a child versus learning an adult is a matter of degree: the brain is far more impressionable (neuroscientists use the term plastic) in early life than in maturity. This plasticity has both a positive and a negative side. On the positive side, it means that young children's brains are more open to learning and enriching influences. On the negative side, it also means that young children's brains are more vulnerable to developmental problems should their environment prove especially impoverished or un-nurturing.

Early education programs like Parent As Teachers (PAT) are extremely important in helping families to understand the importance of nurturing and teaching our children. They also help spot problems early, thus getting children the help that they need to become successful adults. My daughter is currently enrolled in the PAT program in Juneau. As a first time dad, this program has been invaluable to my family! We have learned so many valuable skills from this program including better ways to interact with our daughter in order to encourage her curiosity and learning. This is a fantastic community resource that will improve the lives of children. I am a much better parent because of this program. Let us not forget that knowledge is power and that raising children is a community effort. Children do not come with owner's manuals, programs like PAT give parent the tools to help their children thrive.

While I know that you will have to make many difficult decisions while balancing the budget, I urge you consider our future and to not cut educational programs for children. Doing so will have a very negative effect on all of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Rob Palmer, Juneau AK

**From:** Rob Palmer  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Early childhood education  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 3:33:33 PM

---

Dear Finance Committee,

I urge you to reconsider cutting funds for early childhood education in Alaska. While I understand that Alaska is facing a very difficult budget shortfall and that funds must be cut, I would like you consider the future of our state and country before cutting early childhood education.

While we face financial hardships today, we must also be looking towards building a better future. Our children are that future and it is vitally important that they receive a great education. After all, they will be the ones deciding important things about our own future as we age! Numerous studies have shown that the first three years of our lives are crucial for brain development. The major difference between brain development in a child versus learning an adult is a matter of degree: the brain is far more impressionable (neuroscientists use the term plastic) in early life than in maturity. This plasticity has both a positive and a negative side. On the positive side, it means that young children's brains are more open to learning and enriching influences. On the negative side, it also means that young children's brains are more vulnerable to developmental problems should their environment prove especially impoverished or un-nurturing.

Early education programs like Parent As Teachers (PAT) are extremely important in helping families to understand the importance of nurturing and teaching our children. They also help spot problems early, thus getting children the help that they need to become successful adults. My daughter is currently enrolled in the PAT program in Juneau. As a first time dad, this program has been invaluable to my family! We have learned so many valuable skills from this program including better ways to interact with our daughter in order to encourage her curiosity and learning. This is a fantastic community resource that will improve the lives of children. I am a much better parent because of this program. Let us not forget that knowledge is power and that raising children is a community effort. Children do not come with owner's manuals, programs like PAT give parent the tools to help their children thrive.

While I know that you will have to make many difficult decisions while balancing the budget, I urge you consider our future and to not cut educational programs for children. Doing so will have a very negative effect on all of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Rob Palmer, Juneau AK

**From:** [emily harshman](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** funding for early childhood education programs  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 3:19:29 PM

---

Dear Finance Committee,

I urge you to reconsider cutting funds for early childhood education in Alaska. While I understand that Alaska is facing a very difficult budget shortfall and that funds must be cut, I would like you consider the future of our state and country before cutting early childhood education.

While we face financial hardships today, we must also be looking towards building a better future. Our children are that future and it is vitally important that they receive a great education. After all, they will be the ones deciding important things about our own future as we age! Numerous studies have shown that the first three years of our lives are crucial for brain development. The major difference between brain development in a child versus learning an adult is a matter of degree: the brain is far more impressionable (neuroscientists use the term plastic) in early life than in maturity. This plasticity has both a positive and a negative side. On the positive side, it means that young children's brains are more open to learning and enriching influences. On the negative side, it also means that young children's brains are more vulnerable to developmental problems should their environment prove especially impoverished or un-nurturing.

Early education programs like Parent As Teachers (PAT) are extremely important in helping families to understand the importance of nurturing and teaching our children. They also help spot problems early, thus getting children the help that they need to become successful adults. My daughter is currently enrolled in the PAT program in Juneau. As a first time mom, this program has been invaluable to my family! We have learned so many valuable skills from this program including better ways to interact with our daughter in order to encourage her curiosity and learning. This is a fantastic community resource that will improve the lives of children. Let us not forget that knowledge is power and that raising children is a community effort. Children do not come with owner's manuals, programs like PAT give parents the tools to help their children thrive.

While I know that you will have to make many difficult decisions while balancing the budget, I urge you consider our future and to not cut educational programs for children. Doing so will have a very negative effect on all of Alaska.

Sincerely,  
Emily Palmer, Juneau AK



**From:** Gretchen Murphy  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** fund early childhood education  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 8:45:05 AM

---

As a retired educator, I know the importance of solid foundations and getting off on the right foot. I have taught children and coached teachers all over the state, from Ketchikan to Barrow to Bethel. The one consistency in failure is children who are not ready to learn. I taught preschool math concepts to high schoolers because they never had the proper beginnings. Early childhood education is critical to success all through life. Please redeem its funding.

Gretchen Murphy  
Retired  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**From:** [Courtney Lyons](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early Learning funding  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 2:40:16 PM

---

Hi,

I am writing this letter because I recently learned of the deep cuts proposed to the state budget in the areas of early childhood education. As a parent and an educator, I find this an abhorrent solution to the state budget shortcomings. Early childhood education is critical for the development of our youth. Children's brains develop rapidly between ages 1-8, learning both social and cognitive skills. These skills help them succeed not only in school, but in their lives as adults. Early childhood education efforts can increase academic achievement, which correlates with lower poverty in later life. These programs are much more than babysitting or entertainment, they are tools for families to help bring the next generation up out of poverty. Please do not cut these programs!

Sincerely,  
Courtney Lyons

PhD candidate  
University of Alaska Fairbanks

--

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So is a lot." Albert Einstein

**From:** [Ashley Crace](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB36  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 8:00:01 AM

---

**Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, for the record my name is Ashley Crace. I am writing regarding HB36 and want to make the following points: It is imperative that we continue with our prek programs in order to better prepare our young children for the increased demands of our public school system. Many students in our bush villages have limited opportunities, and our preschool programs can not only increase their learning, social, and emotional skills, but also provide strategies for their parents. Our post data scores always show an increase in language skills when our students enter Kindergarten in our district. Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.**

--

Ashley Crace  
Lower Kuskokwim School District  
Director of Special Education  
and Early Childhood Education  
PO Box 305  
Bethel, AK 99559  
(907) 543-4870

**From:** Christina Barlow  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Re cuts to education and library  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 8:00:43 PM

---

Dear Legislators and or Committee:

This note is to please ask you not to cut the support to our public libraries and rethink the cuts to the education of our children. Alaska students in the rural schools need the support in both the public schools and in the public libraries. This support needs to come in the form of financial resources from the state. In our rural community, we have no preschool, and the local Head Start program closed its doors about a two months ago. Without the public library serving the needs of our preschoolers and providing hard copy books, ebooks, and Internet to many families, our children will definitely be at a disadvantage.

At Craig High School, we have already cut the teaching staff in the past two years. We have one math teacher trying to meet the needs of our students; students line up after school for a couple hours to get extra help. Our electives have been cut to the point that several of our seniors are asking to be able to leave school at noon or before because there are no electives that interest them, and there are only so many online classes that they can take before getting bored. Several students have already indicated that they will be moving over the summer to schools down south that offer more choices. Although finances are difficult for all of us, perhaps it is time to reconsider other sources of income for the state. Craig currently has sales tax to fund city projects; even the larger cities in Alaska do not all have sales tax. We have been trying to do a lot with too little for too long.

Please fund Alaska education at all levels.

Thank you.

Christina Barlow  
Craig, Alaska

**From:** Marlowe Dunker  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Parents as Teachers Program  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 9:08:54 PM

---

Respected House Finance Committee Members,

I am writing to convey my deep concern over the possible funding loss for the Parents as Teachers program in Juneau, Ak. I am a parent of a 16 month old who is currently in the program. We have benefited in countless ways from our participation in this program and would like to see it continue for Juneau families in the future. I am a nurse here in Juneau and my husband is a carpenter. We have always understood how early education can impact the long term development of children but by participating in PAT we have gained practical skills and knowledge to put that into practice. We personally know of a number of family and friends who have had PAT be the first to identify that their children had developmental concerns. By identifying this early on, before the child would have even been in preschool, they were able to connect them with community resources as well as the extra support from PAT to assist them in addressing their children's needs. With the additional, EARLY support the two children that we know well have gradually made achievements that I don't think would have happened otherwise.

Please continue to fund this is a priority program.

Marlowe Dunker and Tony Talbot  
907-209-7322

**From:** Azminda Alvarado  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Pre-k programs  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 5:51:15 AM

---

To whom it may concern:

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to reconsider your decision of cutting funds for the education programs especially the PreK program, this program has been very helpful for my child because now he knows school is a safe place and has a sense of security, he has learned to take more educational risks, now he is on kindergarten and he knows letters, sounds, writes them and he's starting to read on his own, he also knows basic additions and he is able to count, his scores are very good and he also is motivated to learn another language, all this was possible because he had the opportunity to go to a Pre-school. The PreK program has been very helpful for me as a parent as well, now I have a better understanding on how my child learns and I know how to support his learning at home, probably this doesn't mean anything for you but for us who can't afford a private school means everything because this is the beginning of success for our kids, I do believe that the early education starts on kids the more familiar they become with the educational path and it will prevent them from dropping school in the future. We need to keep our kids in school not on streets and cutting funds is not the solution for this problem, it scares me that my baby girl won't have the opportunity in the next years to attend PreK as my son did.

I really hope you consider this letter and try to understand us as parents who want a better future for the generations to come.

Azminda Alvarado

Sent from my iPhone

## Darrell Breese

---

**From:** cbookless <carobo@rocketmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 28, 2015 11:37 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** editor@juneauempire.com  
**Subject:** Open letter to the Legislature regarding PreK funding

Honorable Legislators,

I am writing to urge funding for pre-kindergarten programs. What research says is the truth - PreK is the gift that just keeps giving. Long term benefits for students who attended Pre-K programs include higher IQ scores, higher graduation rates, higher percentages of home ownership, and higher income. PreK is not only a gift to the children that attend the programs, but a gift to society in general with a more productive work force and a healthier economy. There is no better win-win proposal than funding pre-K education.

I will paste in a number of websites below that are links to research findings on the benefits of pre-K.

Sincerely,  
Carole Bookless  
Douglas, Alaska  
907-500-9900

### The Research on Pre-K



The Research on Pre-K

View on [www.centerforpublicpolicy.org](#) Preview by Yahoo

### Why All Children Benefit from Pre-K

#### Why All Children Benefit from Pre-K

Should publicly supported, high-quality pre-kindergarten be available to all children, or should states "target" pre-k to children at the greatest risk of poor achievement?

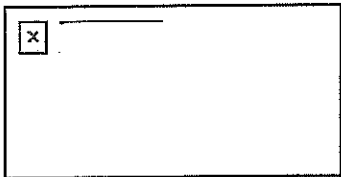
View on [www.pewtrusts.org](#)

Preview by Yahoo

<http://nieer.org/resources/files/Benefits.pdf>

### Benefits of Pre-K Programs

Benefits of Pre-K Programs



Stand believes that providing early learning opportunities for pre-k children is vital in closing achievement gaps.

[View on standleadershipcente...](#)

Preview by Yahoo



**From:** [Amy Shinsel](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Pat funding  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 2:35:07 PM

---

To whom it may concern,

When I moved to Alaska 3 1/2 years ago I had a two-year-old and was pregnant and had no friends. I ran into the parents as teachers coordinator and got signed up for the program. It help me get information about much-needed community resources to find my place in Alaska and help me get through what were very lonely times. When my child was born I developed postpartum depression and my parents as teachers coordinator helped me understand what was going on and gave me the courage to find help. parents as teachers has made a great difference in my life and made me a better parent and I hope that the funding can continue to support other parents as it has for me. My third child is now in parents as teachers and we enjoy every minute of it!

Amy Shinsel  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Wendy Burke  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Don't cut the PAT funding!  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 10:30:38 AM

---

Hello,

My name is Wendy Lee Burke and I live in Juneau and I have twins who were in the PAT program for almost two years. Please do not cut the funding for the PAT program through AEYC. This is an amazing program and it would be a devastating blow to Juneau's young children if you end the program. It is so popular that we were on the wait list for ONE YEAR just to get into the program! My twins, Aaron and Lucy, are now 3 1/2 years old, so we have aged out of the program. I was so sad when we aged out. It was wonderful to have a PAT teacher come to our house and bring fun activities, lessons and books for my children. We all just loved it and looked forward to it! In addition, the monthly family get-togethers were fantastic and we really miss those.

PLEASE do not cut the PAT funding!

Sincerely,  
Wendy, Channing, Aaron and Lucy Burke  
907-723-7676

**From:** [Jennifer Walker](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** please support early learning!  
**Date:** Monday, March 02, 2015 4:18:45 PM

---

Hello,

As a citizen of Juneau, AK I urge you to continue funding early learning in our state and community. We have taken part in the AEYC PAT program and it was unbelievably helpful and gave me such a solid foundation for understanding my son's developmental stages and how best to help him learn and grow. I used the knowledge and ideas they gave me with my son, the kids that attend my tiny daycare, and with children I volunteer to watch at a local shelter. The Imagination Station books have been a well-loved part of our bedtime routine since they've been arriving at our house. The Family Nights at the Library . . . man. All such great stuff in our community that supports our littlest minds and is part of what makes this such a great place to raise kids.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Walker  
500-8929

**Darrell Breese**

---

**From:** Angela Fritz <arfritz09@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 02, 2015 2:12 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Fund PAT!

Hi!

We understand that funding for PAT is going to end on July 1st. Our family has been with the program for a year and we really love what this program is doing for families. Please reconsider dropping funding. We believe that a good start in childhood in the home is crucial to lifelong well being. Support families and the next generation; this program is doing great things!

Sincerely,

Angela and Alex Fritz  
Juneau, AK

**From:** Nelson, Sabrina M (DNR)  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please continue funding for the PAT and Best Beginnings programs  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 8:39:09 AM

---

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for taking the time to consider the importance of the Parents As Teacher's program (PAT) and programs like Best Beginnings including the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, these programs have made a huge difference in the life of my family. I am a full-time working mother that is also trying to earn a degree through online attendance with the University of Alaska Southeast. I value education and with the limited amount of time I have to juggle all these priorities, these programs have been a phenomenal asset to our everyday lives. I have two boys, Rylan, 3 1/2 years old, and Osias, 1 year old.

We joined the PAT program within the first two months of Rylan's life and continued until he aged out of the program. When I first joined the program I was an uneducated and unconfident mess. What can I say, I was a new parent. I wondered how the hospital could let me walk out their front door entrusting me with a baby. At almost 30, I didn't know the first thing about infants; it had been too long since I last was a babysitter in high school and even then it wasn't watching a newborn. I was fearful, struggling with the reality of responsibility cradled in my arms. It was beyond comprehension what to do next with this little life I brought into this world. To put it bluntly, I needed guidance and support. Emily, my PAT advisor, was there for us. I had questions, a lot of questions. I wanted to know about my child, I wanted to encourage his development, I wanted to know about what support and resources were available to us, guidance on childcare, information about first foods, potty training, what developmental milestones were next, how to communicate with him before his verbal skills developed, what activities were around town; the list was always growing.

I looked forward to the home visits, sharing precious time with a knowledgeable educator that felt like an extension of my family. The visits were structured and informative; educational white papers, the monthly newsletter, developmental screenings, activities (the part producing the most memorable moments), a new book, and discussion about what I wanted to know about next. Through these regular visits I developed confidence in myself to make decisions about my child's future, if I didn't know the answer who to contact to direct me to how to find the answer, how important reading together is and so much more. The relationship developed thru the support of Emily built confidence and trust in myself as a parent and as an educator of my own children. Emily and I shared several moments with each of my children (developmental milestones) that we explored and celebrated.

Through the monthly parties where other families gathered at various locations, bonds with other families were created and are currently sustained. It was a wonderful way to network with other parents that you can relate to because they are experiencing the same things you are. The snacks were delightful and our favorite

place was always the pool. Emily gave me the tools to be a good parent and encourage the growth as it was happening. Without the PAT program's involvement I would not have become the knowledgeable, supportive, and actively involved parent that I am today.

When I look back at this program I am grateful that it was such a large part of Rylan's life and I am saddened that Osias wasn't able to take full advantage of such a wonderful program. The opportunity to influence the future is here; it starts in the home, it starts with solid foundations, it starts with strong relationships, and it starts with knowledge. The PAT program provides parents with education and the chance to make a better future for their children. I hope this program will be around for a long time and many other families will receive the benefits that I was able to receive.

Through the Monthly Newsletter I am regularly informed about events going on around town that I can participate in with my children. There are several events that we take advantage of attending during the course of the month and are considered very important bonding times together. We attend the first Tuesday family library night at the downtown library and receive a book, the first Saturday Workshop at Home Depot, the breastfeeding café on the third Saturday, the family night at the turf on the second and fourth Friday's, and all of the specially sponsored swim's none of which would I have known about without the Monthly newsletter.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is another program that is a part of our daily life. Friday of every week we, as a family, go to the post office to check the mail. This is another special moment in our regular routine. My son is always asking if there is going to be a new book in the mail. Without this program, there will be nothing to look forward to in the mail anymore. This program is deeply intertwined in our evening routine, before bed we spend almost an hour selecting and reading books from our personal library before bedtime. Since personal finances are limited for our family, our home library is composed of almost exclusively books obtained through the PAT program, the first Tuesday family library night, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Please take a moment and put your feet in my shoes. Beyond the monotonous grind of daily life, when are the moments I, as a parent, look forward to? Yes, the time with my children which hopefully, will be continually enriched by the PAT and Best Beginning programs.

Sabrina Nelson  
907-723-0191

**From:** Averyl Veliz  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please fund Early Education programs!  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 11:04:31 AM

---

To whom it may concern;

It was never my intention to be a stay-at-home-mom. I have a master's degree that I still have every intention of making use of. However, when we decided to move here and start a family in Juneau 5 years ago, we were completely unprepared for the extremely tight child care market in both cost and availability. I had our son on a couple wait lists around town so I could get a job, but it took between 14-16 months for any spots to open up for him. And this was *before* the childcare crisis in Juneau which plagues our community today! I had no option but to forgo my career in exchange for staying home with him, a predicament that resulted in no income to pay for child care once it was available. So I gave up all those coveted spots that I had waited over a year to obtain.

The situation was depressing, to say the least. Although I have deep roots in Juneau, neither my husband nor I have any family in town. Nor did we have any established friendships upon moving here. I had 0 support with a new baby in tow. I felt isolated, depressed, and confused; this was not what I had in mind. Then Joy Lyon came to me, offering to enroll us in their pilot program of Parents As Teachers. Instantly, we were plugged into the amazing Emily Coate, an in-home child development specialist who visited us every 3 weeks for 3 years. She helped us understand childhood development; made sure our son was on track, what to expect as "normal" behavior, and what stages to expect in the near future. She came prepared with activities that we could use to help build our son's motor, fine-motor, speech, literacy, and social-emotional skills. She also did health screenings including ear, eye, and autism. Helping parents and caregivers understand child development and supporting them are crucial. From my experience, most parent frustration is rooted in not understanding a child's communication tactics or developmental ability. Chronic misunderstanding and lack of support results in the abuse of a child from overly tired, isolated, and stressed adults. Fortunately, as a direct correlation to being plugged in with Parents As Teachers, none of my children's milestones have been a shock or unmanageable.

Each time she visited, she let our kids choose a book. Along with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, we have a wonderful children's library in our home that gets used at least 2-3 hours every day. I am proud to say that because of this constant emphasis in reading, my 3 ½ year old can spell many words and even read much of his own library. His imagination has exploded through the roof in the past year, resulting in interactive play with friends, his sister, and myself. He's now teaching me many things about outer space and oceanography; two topics I basically knew anything about before I had a 3-year-old.

Parents As Teachers also has group gatherings once a month, and as avid attenders, we instantly grew to know many other families with young kids. These have resulted into true friendships both for the kids and the parents and helped foster co-parenting opportunities. A huge burden of stress is lifted for the parents when you are plugged into a network of other's in a similar situation.

We also deeply rely on the Learning Bulletin to inform us of the on-goings around the community for the 0-5 crowd. Prenatal support, turf-for-tots, Lunch Bunch at the Aquatic Center, parent support groups including emotional/Post-partum depression, child development, playdates of all ages, Library Night and so much more are all outlined in this invaluable monthly publishing. They also include an age-appropriate healthy snack that the kids can make themselves, and parent tips for reading & analyzing the monthly Dolly Parton book.

So Please, I beg you, invest in Alaska's future and continue to support early child development programs. I promise you, it's what's best for both children and adults alike. Thank you.

Averyl Veliz  
c. 310.962.8492  
Juneau, AK

--

To view my most recent artwork, please visit my blog at [averylveliz.blogspot.com](http://averylveliz.blogspot.com)



**From:** Emily Coate  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Early Learning matters  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 11:16:11 AM

---

Dear members of the House Finance Committee-

I was driving home last night and happened to catch the end of this story on NPR (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2015/03/02/377569413/can-family-secrets-make-you-sick>). It talked about the start of the Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACE study that looked at whether or not childhood experiences have any bearing on who we become and how our bodies age and combat stress through our lives. The answer is YES. Funding for programs like Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings IS essential because it's supporting the most vulnerable of Alaska's population. The experiences these children have stay with them through their whole lives, and help shape how they function in society, how they will help guide our state and most importantly, how they will raise their own children. We have to stop throwing money at the problem... let's work to avoid the problems to begin with. Reinstate funding for Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings and show the state that you care about families doing the hard work of raising our future Alaskans.

Thank you-

Emily Coate Thompson

Juneau AK

**From:** [Cynthia Parkin](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 9:20:48 AM

---

*Thank you to the Chair and Committee members for the opportunity to testify. My name is Cynthia Parkin and I am writing today as a supporter of young children.<?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />*

*I support restoring funding to Alaska's early care and learning systems and programs. For Alaska's children today and for the state of our economy tomorrow, it is critical that we invest in priorities like:*

***Best Beginnings** and their work to increase community engagement around quality early learning and early literacy through programs like Imagination Library.*

***Parents As Teachers** to provide services to families with young children with critical home visiting services.*

***PreK**, an investment in our state in quality early learning to ensure our youngest Alaskan's get a healthy start in their education and enter Kindergarten ready for success.*

*Research has demonstrated that investing early on in a child's life helps better prepare children for school, for work and for life. Thank you for your leadership in supporting quality early learning for Alaska families and children.*

*Cynthia Parkin,*

*2419 Telequana Dr.*

*Anchorage, AK 99517*

**From:** [Dawn Harmon](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Funding for Best Beginnings  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 3:48:00 PM

---

## A MESSAGE TO THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Instead of writing my own thoughts regarding the importance of funding early learning programs, such as Best Beginnings, I looked to someone more educated than myself; someone who is respected around the world; former secretary of state, General Colin Powell.

The following is from a commencement address given by General Powell:

**I spend a lot of time with youth groups, and I say to people, "When does the education process begin?" We're always talking about, "Let's fix the schools. Let's do more for our teachers. Let's put more computers in our schools. Let's get it all online."**

**That isn't the whole answer. It's part of the answer. But the real answer begins with bringing a child to the school with structure in that child's heart and soul to begin with.**

**When does the learning process begin? Does it begin in first grade? No, no, it begins the first time a child in a mother's arms looks up at the mother and says, "Oh, this must be my mother. She's the one who feeds me. Oh yeah, when I don't feel so good down there, she takes care of me. It's her language I will learn." And at that moment they shut out all the other languages that they could be learning at that age, but by three months, that's her. And if the person doing it, whether it's the mother or grandmother, whoever's doing it, that is when the education process begins. That's when language begins. That's when love begins. That's when structure begins. That's when you start to imprint on the child that "you are special, you are different from every other child in the world. And we're going to read to you." A child who has not been read to is in danger when that child gets to school. A child who doesn't know his or her colors or doesn't know how to tell time, doesn't know how to tie shoes, doesn't know how to do those things, and doesn't know how to do something that goes by a word that was drilled into me as a kid: mind. Mind your manners! Mind your adults! Mind what you're saying! This is the way children are raised properly. And I watched my own young grandchildren now come along and they're, much to the distress of my children, they are acting just like we did. You know? You imprint them.**

**And that's what you have to do to prepare children for education and for school. And I'm working at all the energy I have to sort of communicate this message that we need preschool, we need Head Start, we need prenatal care. The education process begins even before the child is born, and if you don't do that, you're going to have difficulty. And we are having difficulties in so many of our communities and so many of our schools where kids are coming to first grade and their eyes are blazing, they've got their little knapsack on and they're ready to go, and then they realize they're not like the other first graders who know books, have been read to, can do their alphabet. And by the third grade, the kids who didn't have that structure and minding in the beginning start to realize they're behind, and what do they do? They act it out. They act it out, and they're on their way to jail or they're on their way to being dropouts. It's predictable. If you're not at the right reading level at third grade, you are a candidate for jail at age 18,**

and we have the highest incarceration rate because we're not getting our kids the proper start in life.

But it begins with the gift of a good start. If we don't give that gift to each and every one of our kids, if we don't invest at the earliest age, we're going to be running into difficulties. It's why we have a dropout rate of roughly 25 percent overall and almost 50 percent of our minority population living in low-income areas, because they're not getting the gift of a good start.

General Powell has also stated the following:

**"You can invest in children today, or you can build more prisons tomorrow."**

Frankly, ladies and gentlemen, I can't state the case for funding early learning better than General Powell. I urge you to reconsider the cut to programs such as Best Beginnings.

Sincerely,  
Dawn Harmon - Fairbanks, AK

**Dawn Harmon**

"How can you talk if you haven't got a brain?"

**Dorothy - Wizard of Oz**

**From:** Montero, George L (DNR)  
**To:** House.Finance  
**Cc:** Mavacat  
**Subject:** Our Children Our Future!  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 3:17:26 PM

---

Hello,

My name is George Montero, a resident of Juneau, a parent of 5 children, and a grandfather of three. I believe that the building blocks to our children's future starts from the time they are born. Those first few years of development are so important in their growth, and crucial to children's future learning abilities.

I am wondering why my fellow Alaskans, my Government, are evening gambling, or even weighing in on the risk of cutting away the very fabric that will crush our children, your children's future, or Alaska's future. For the last seven years I and my wife Christy have utilized every resource available to teach our children starting with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library books, Head Start, and now the IDEA program.

Currently we home school our little ones, Sara-7, and Daisy-5 years of age, through the IDEA program. When we first started these programs friends, and family had already noticed that our children had developed a certain criteria above their siblings. Their English was profound, and their actions more analytical in their response to learning new things.

The IDEA program even wondered if this would work for us. With me working full time with the State, and my wife a full time home maker, and teacher. I say this because my wife is deaf, and I do not mean hard of hearing. Yes, she is deaf. At first I had some concerns, but after several years I am completely on board with her. Every day gives a new, and our children's future is very important to the both of us. To watch them grow, and cherish what they learn every day is at personal best, and our greatest achievement on every level. Sara is now in 3<sup>rd</sup> and Daisy 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Both girls have also been in Violin class since October of 2013, and continue to learn how to play music under the direction of Lisa Miles, The Heart Strings. Sara has just graduated from Suzuki volume one, and Daisy continues to strive under Mrs. Miles instructions.

We are very proud of their learning and take pride in this. To cut Early Learning or any educational programs like the Dolly Parton Imagination Library books funded through Best Beginnings is a gamble that I do not support! The very future of this State starts with our children! Why teach them that education is not important by not giving them the essentials. I ask you why? Are your children not important to you? Is the future of this State not important to you? Was your own education not that important to you? Ask yourself, is this really worth cutting? What's at stake? Our children's future, your children's, or your grandchildren's education are now in your

hands.

Please, I implore you to not take this away! There are things to cut, and there are some things that should not be cut! Would you cut your child from early development!

Cheers,



Department of Natural Resources

*George L. Montero Jr.*

*Requesting RSA/SDPR Grants.*

Accounting Tech III

Support Services Division/ Financial Services

PO Box 111010

Juneau, Alaska 99811-1010

PH: 465-2436 FAX: 465-3886

**From:** [Hayley Anderson](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Please restore funding for our children  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 4:00:32 PM

---

Dear Finance Committee members,

I support restoring funding to Alaska's early care and learning systems and programs. My one-year-old daughter receives a book in the mail each month thanks to funding from Best Beginnings. This program as well as Parents As Teachers and PreK are critical investments in our children today and the state of our economy tomorrow.

Stable families are the backbone of our economy. When you support working families and their young children, you see big returns in a well-prepared workforce that misses fewer days of work, as well as a society that is healthier and happier. Isn't that what we want for Alaska?

The essence of the American dream is giving our children a better, brighter future. Thank you for your leadership in supporting quality early learning for Alaska's children.

Sincerely,  
Hayley Anderson  
1964 Commodore Drive  
Anchorage, AK 99507

**From:** Karen White  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Proposed Funding Cuts to early childhood development  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 2:57:56 PM

---

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am the nursing director at Bartlett Beginnings at Bartlett Regional Hospital. But I am writing as a Juneau resident who is extremely concerned about the proposed funding cuts to Best Beginnings, Parents As Teachers, and Pre-K. Included in these programs is the Imagination Library wherein each newly born baby is eligible to receive a free book a month for their first 5 years of life. All of these programs foster childhood development and strengthen family relationships. The long-term benefits of these investments cannot be refuted. Please do the smart thing and invest in the future of our youngest residents.

Thank you.

Karen White

**Karen White, BSN, RNC-OB**

OB Director

Bartlett Regional Hospital

3260 Hospital Dr.

Juneau, AK 99801

907-796-8657

kwhite@bartlettthospital.org



**From:** [Kathy Blanc](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Reinstate funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and Pre-K Programs  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 2:35:03 PM

---

My name is Kathy Blanc. I am a parent and Juneau resident. I am writing to remind you that early learning programs are the most effective investments the government can make, even during difficult fiscal times.

High-quality early education programs are proven to:

- Help children enter kindergarten with the skills needed to succeed in school
- Increase high-school graduation rates and college attendance
- Reduce teen pregnancy rates, crime, and other social problems
- Reduce long-term social costs for special education, child welfare, and public assistance

The achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers is apparent by 18 months of age. The good news is that early learning programs significantly narrow this gap.

Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and Pre-K programs are investments that provide both short- and long-term economic benefits.

Not investing in at-risk children through early childhood programs poses a profound threat to the future of our economy.

Fast forward 20 years without adequate investments in early childhood service, and we are left with a less educated workforce that has a lower earning potential, is making fewer tax contributions, and is creating a greater need for spending on preventable social services.

While we focus on reducing the deficit, we must recognize that early childhood programs are cost-effective investments that are critical to Alaska's economic growth.

Sadly, young children don't have lobbyists -- Please keep your youngest constituents in mind during your committee work!

Thank you for your service to the state.

Kathy Blanc  
3003 Foster Avenue  
Juneau, AK 99801

**From:** [Kelly McBride](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** testimony regarding budget  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 4:55:12 PM

---

My name is Kelly McBride. I am the chair of the Mat Su Imagination Library, and I work closely with our Widening the Net preschool program and the Early Childhood Partnership of Mat-Su. I came to the Mat-Su LIO on my personal time to testify, but had class at 5 PM and had to leave before it was Mat-Su's turn.

In light of current oil prices, we need to look at opportunities to invest in the future. I believe children are our future, and they are worth investing in. Early intervention is the best way to change our struggling education system, and the best way to change the trajectory towards an ever growing prison system. We have more and more children coming to us with challenging behaviors or who have had adverse childhood experiences such as trauma and abuse. Children with high quality learning experiences are not only more likely to succeed in school, but impact on our community long term by being more likely to graduate from high school, attend post-secondary education, have health insurance and make healthier lifestyle choices.

The proposed cuts would have a significant impact on our community. The MSIL provides books to 3200 children a month. The Early Childhood Partnership provides activities for families who teach their young children at home and private childcare providers. The Widening the Net preschool serves a 100 children at Butte, Goose Bay, Shaw, Trapper Creek and Willow, many of which do not have any other opportunity to attend preschool. The children who have attended this program in previous years have outperformed the district average in every area of the Kindergarten Developmental Profile and on literacy assessments. They are more likely to be successful not only in school, but as future citizens of the Mat-Su.

Please consider re-instating at least partial funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and State PreK. I hope that Alaska will someday consider voluntary universal preK for 4 year old children as part of our education system, but HB 36 was not mentioned in the budget.

Respectfully,

Kelly McBride

**From:** [Rebecca Sentner](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Finance Committee Public Testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 9:52:36 AM

---

Hello Chair and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify online. My name is Rebecca Sentner and I am emailing you today as a concerned resident of Anchorage, AK.

I support restoring funding to Alaska's early care and learning systems and programs. I believe it is our responsibility as a community to value, protect, and provide the best possible environment for our children. Evidence shows investing in early care not only benefits Alaska's children today, but also improves the state of our economy tomorrow.

I think it is important to invest in programs such as:

- **Best Beginnings** and their work to increase community engagement around quality early learning and early literacy through programs like Imagination Library
- **Parents As Teachers** to provide services to families with young children with critical home visiting services
- **PreK**, an investment in our state in quality early learning to ensure our youngest Alaskan's get a healthy start in their education and enter Kindergarten ready for success

Thank you for your leadership in supporting quality early learning for Alaska families and children.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Sentner

**From:** Amanda Goins  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Keep early childhood funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 10:23:47 AM

---

Hello,

I am writing in as a concerned citizen. I understand that early learning funding is on the table to be cut. We use the Dolly Parton Imagination Library service and my son LOVES getting a book every month. It definitely encourages his enthusiasm for reading.

We also utilize the various activities and resources offered by AEYC from the library nights to the turf for tots night. These opportunities play a vital role in our son's socialization.

Additionally, while I am still on the waitlist for the Parents as Teachers program, I believe it to be a vital program to start children on the right path, encouraging their developmental milestones.

Please keep funding these important programs for our children.

Sincerely,

Amanda Goins

**From:** [Whitelos](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** House Finance Committee Budget PREK Grant March 2,2014  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 7:57:41 PM

---

Dear Committee .Chair, Thank you for accepting my written testimony. My name is Janet Balice and I have been a teacher at Nome Elementary for the past nine years. I am speaking to the proposed cuts to the PREK grant which is a program that directly affects children and the positive results can be documented. I have seen Nome Elementary and Nome Kawerak Head Start before the PREK Grant and after the PREK grant. Before the PREK grant students came into kindergarten scared, angry, confused and not knowing the basic academic or personal skills to succeed at school. A number of them took a lot of the principal's time in their office in the fall crying, screaming, kicking until one day lo and behold they turned into pretty nice kids and started to try to make a go of this new thing called kindergarten. But even then they were far behind grade level markers and often would fall even farther behind as they tried to maneuver the mysterious world of classroom tools like crayons and scissors, school routine, PE class, the lunchroom and interacting with other students. The data we use in Elementary school says that if a student is not on grade level for reading in first grade they have about a 10% chance of ever catching up and having a successful completion to their school career. Well with a school beginning like I describe that is not surprising.

Contrast that now for the past five years of the PRE K grant to our 50 some Head Start and Nome Preschool graduates who walk into their first day of kindergarten head held high, smile on their face, waving goodbye to their families and sitting down to start to learn. And the proof is that every fall when they take the kindergarten entrance screening more often than not they are at proficient or near proficient for entering kindergartners as compared to those who do not have the advantage of this structured Early Childhood program. Our data tracking of these students shows that they continue to make gains and bust right through that kindergarten curriculum. This PREK program changes the lives of students and their families and takes the wonderful things local preschool entities do and makes them even better.

Lastly, it does this at a cost of \$6330 per student because of the partnership with local existing preschool entities which is far less than the approximately \$17,000 dollars per student per year that is spent on students K-12. It is a bargain that reaps benefits for the student, their family and the community throughout a child's school career.

**From:** [Rebecca Gaguine](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early Education Funding  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 7:56:04 PM

---

Dear Finance Committee,

I cannot imagine how difficult your jobs are. And I'm sure that no matter what programs you put on the chopping block, people will be upset about it,

But I think that the long lasting ramifications of cutting something as important as early childhood education.

Alaska routinely ranks within the bottom 50% of the nation, and I'm betting there'd be no surprise to see that the states that do rank highest have no shortage of amazing early education programs.

I read an interesting study recently that children who came from lower socioeconomic families hear an average of 1/3 the words on a daily basis than a family who can afford to have a stay-at-home parent. Programs like the Imaginiation Library, and Parents-as-Teachers, offer an opportunity for kids to be exposed to more words and more education concepts, and especially since these programs are targeted at families who might be struggling, they are vitally important for the growth of our future leaders.

Please do not cut off chances for every child, no matter what their circumstances allow, an equal chance for learning and more importantly to enjoy that learning.

Sincerely  
Rebecca Gaguine

**From:** [Sara Stekol](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Funding early childhood education programs  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 10:53:17 PM

---

Dear sirs and madams,

I am a local Juneau parent with concerns about the recent funding cuts to early childhood education programs, including Best Beginnings, Parents As Teachers, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. My child has been involved in many ways with these programs, which have been not only exceptionally helpful from a parenting perspective, but also have provided my child with greater breadth of experiences than would otherwise have been possible.

I understand the necessity of funding cuts during a budget crisis, but with the obvious inefficient spending of money by the local school districts, I am upset to see cuts made to such well run and beneficial programs as AEYC provides. These programs are important to the social, emotional, physical, and educational development of young children across multiple socio-economic statuses, and provide a solid building block for further education in the K-12 system.

Please reconsider cuts to these programs.

Thank you.

Sara Stekol

**From:** Sat Nam Kaur Khalsa  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Early learning program  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 1:59:37 PM

---

My name is Sat Nam Sears and I am from Juneau Alaska. I am a mom of a 15m old beautiful boy and I have benefitted greatly from the Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings programs. Being a new mom is overwhelming and time consuming. Parents as Teachers really helped me focus on what what was important with my infant. There were activities to do and someone to talk to about all the changes and challenges. Connecting with other families and finding resources in the community is invaluable. There were so many times when I was clueless and my home coordinator would share some pertinent wisdom. I don't know where I would be without the program. Please keep the program that is such a big help to so many families. Thank you, Sat Nam Sears

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** Tamora Harding  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Support the Children, our future  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 10:30:49 AM

---

*Thank you for this opportunity to share my support for quality early care and education in Alaska.*

*My name is Tamora Harding-Childs. I am a mother, an early childhood specialist for thread, an active member of Early Childhood Partnership of Mat-Su, and a spouse of a public school teacher. I am impacted daily by the need to protect and promote early care and education in my state. I support restoring the funding to Alaska's early care/learning systems and programs for our children today and for the state of our economy tomorrow. For the continued advancement of our bright futures, we must invest in foundational priorities such as:*

- **Best Beginnings** and their community engagement around quality early learning and early literacy.*
- **Parents As Teachers** that support families with critical home visiting services for their young children.*
- **PreK**, an investment in Alaska's youngest citizens get a proper start in their education of 12 years and beyond.*

*Thank you for your leadership in supporting and protecting the present and the promising future of Alaska families and children.*

**Tamora Harding-Childs, M. Ed**

Early Childhood Specialist

Direct: 907.373.5024 Fax: 907.373.5067

ANC Main: 907.265.3100 or 800.278.3723

ANC Fax: 907.265.3115 or 877.563.1959

[tharding@threadalaska.org](mailto:tharding@threadalaska.org)

[www.threadalaska.org](http://www.threadalaska.org) / [Facebook](#)

**thread's** Anchorage mailing address:

3350 Commercial Drive, Suite 203

Anchorage, AK 99501



This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual(s) or entity to whom they are addressed. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender immediately and delete this e-mail from your system. Disclosing, copying, distributing, or taking any action on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited.

**From:** [Mike and Andi Story](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#); [Rep. Mark Neuman](#); [Rep. Steve Thompson](#); [Rep. Dan Saddler](#); [Rep. Bryce Edgmon](#); [Rep. Lynn Gattis](#); [Rep. Cathy Munoz](#); [Rep. Lance Pruitt](#); [Representative.Tammil.Wilson@akleg.gov](#); [Rep. Les Gara](#); [Representative.Dave.Guttenberg@akleg.gov](#); [Rep. Scott Kawasaki](#); [Rep. Mike Hawker](#)  
**Cc:** [Sen. Dennis Egan](#); [Rep. Sam Kito](#); [schoolboard@juneauschools.org](#); "Miller, Mark"  
**Subject:** Please Restore one time funds for K- 12 education students  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 9:45:08 PM

---

March 3, 2015

Dear Honorable Representatives of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Andi Story and I am a Juneau School Board member and testifying on behalf of the Board for the children in our district. Thank you for the increase to the Base Student Allocation and the one time funds passed last session. Our Board urges you to prioritize restoring the one time funds.

Loss of the one time funds is a cut of 1.1 million for Juneau students and will result in even bigger class sizes and less attention and resources needed for student learning.

It is more crucial than ever, as we go thru this downsizing of our budget that we prioritize what helps move Alaska ahead as a state, and that is having an educational system in place that is perceived as excellent. People, when looking at where to raise their children and work, or locate their business, look at school offerings, class sizes and student academic achievement.

School Boards and the education community across the state have been working on improving our education. We are doing what the Legislature and community has asked, adopted higher learning standards, and working on improving instruction and delivery choices to our children. It is paying off in Juneau and around the state. In Juneau our overall graduation rate is the highest it has ever been at 80 percent.

Our district has reduced 11 million in the past 4 years and over 100 positions. We are at a tipping point of being able to continue interventions, desired class offerings and maintain reasonable class sizes.

Our economic wellbeing as a state is tied to the educational success of our students. The states with the highest achievement rates, have made investments in early learning so children come to school ready to learn, and the states have strong career and technical programs. Restore the preschool program grants and early learning investments of Best Beginnings, and Parents as Teachers. Please restore the Alaska Construction Academies thru the Department of Labor funds. It funds Juneau's high school classes in the trades including Woods, Welding, Basic Construction, Computer Aided Drafting, Mechanics, and the House Build program.

In closing, I will summarize a favorite quote from a recent editorial in my local paper, "Salmon, oil and minerals are not Alaska's greatest resource, that honor goes to our children". Thank you for your service and guidance over our resources.

Sincerely,

Andi Story

Juneau School Board Member

(907) 789 - 4292

Testimony in Support of  
Parents As Teachers / Best Beginnings / One-Time School Funding  
HFIN, March 3, 2015

Good afternoon, Chairmen, members of the committee.

My name is Aurah Landau, and I live at 626 W. 11<sup>th</sup> St here in Juneau.

Thank you so much for sitting here, taking public testimony. You have such a hard job in tough times, and I'm grateful for your service and that of your staffers.

I'm here testifying as a parent who was in the Parents As Teachers program for about 2 years.

While Parents As Teachers has been shown to help children be better prepared for school and healthy parental interaction helps reduce high cost criminal, health and other interventions down the road, this is my very personal story about what Parents As Teachers meant to my family beyond all that.

From the time my son was born until he was over a year old, my son didn't sleep for more than 45 minutes at a time. That meant that I didn't get a stretch of sleep longer than 30 minutes for months at a time. I was so exhausted that I lived in a total fog.

I thought I knew how to be a good parent and could handle sleeplessness. I had taught kindergarten, knew quite a bit about early childhood development, run weekend programs for youth during religious services, and taken care of lots of younger siblings.

But, this kind of sleep deprivation was a beast. There were times when I could not form a full sentence because I was too tired to remember words. I also grew up with really bad modeling on how to parent. This meant I had a surprising lack of parenting skills that, combined with my exhaustion, made for a dangerous mix.

I was, in effect, a special needs parent. My husband didn't know how to help, our pediatrician didn't have any resources for our specific needs, and I couldn't help myself. My family and I didn't fit into any other programs, and we had no one to turn to.

Our Parents As Teachers coordinator helped me learn healthier ways to deal with my son. What specifically helped me was that she guided us in developing problem-solving strategies tailored to our unique needs, and she suggested that we look at tools used with autistic children to help my son sleep. We did, I got better at coping and my son began to sleep better.

Slowly, we got back to a healthier place as a family. My son has aged out of Parents As Teachers, and we're doing just fine. It wouldn't have happened without the parenting support we got from Parents As Teachers.

I can tell you with 100% certainty that Parents As Teachers helped make my parenting and our home safe for my little boy. Things were so bad, that I do think Parents As Teachers support kept us from needing dramatic and costly interventions for child abuse and neglect. In my family's case, Parents As Teachers was the key to breaking the cycle of generations of violence and abuse.

I just want to note too, that the cost savings to the state, for us, were immediate – not 10, 20, or 30 years out.

Please fund Parents As Teachers and Best Beginnings. There is nothing else available for so many of us who need to learn how to parent in healthy ways.

But early learning is so much bigger an issue for Alaska than just my little story. Our state has horrifically high rates of alcoholism, sexual abuse, and other costly social and health problems. There are extremely high costs in corrections, health care, education and more that in part can be mitigated by investing in healthy parents and healthy families. This is even more true as our state faces severe economic challenges that will increase the financial and social pressures that many parents face.

The science and economic research is conclusive that spending a little on early learning cuts costs enormously in future years. Parents As Teachers is one place to keep funding.

For a very small price in the first few years of a child's life, you can create a legacy of strength in families – in community health and achievement – that will make your record shine.

I also want to ask you to restore the one-time funds for our schools. I value schooling that fosters academic skills, creativity, entrepreneurship, and resiliency for our kids who are going to have to find their way in a fast-paced and challenging global economy.

But, as I look forward to my son moving into the school system, I see teachers struggling with large class sizes where crowd and behavioral control sometimes swallows up time available for learning. We have to keep class sizes small and good teachers around in order to provide the kind of education that will ensure that our kids – and ultimately Alaska as a whole – will succeed.

So please, fund Parents As Teachers and restore the one-time school funding. You will be such heroes to parents across Alaska, and such visionaries for our state – you'll be saving money overall, both immediately and for future years.

Thank you again for your service and for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Aurah Landau

Aurah99@hotmail.com  
626 W. 11<sup>th</sup> St.  
Juneau, AK 99801

**From:** Elizabeth Downing  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** Rep. Paul Seaton; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Peter Micciche  
**Subject:** Education Funding  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 3:11:13 PM

---

[Note: Our Board is conducting superintendent interviews this afternoon and may not be able to testify live.]

Alaska State House Finance Committee

Representatives,

I'd like to share with you the impact of cutting education funding on the Kenai Peninsula schools. The potential loss of the proposed "one-time funding" will not only cut \$2.6m+ to our district but, due to the Maximum Allowable from the Borough, will reduce funding by an additional \$550,000+. We are in the process of trying to make up an \$8 million deficit in our FY16 budget. The one-time funding will go a long way to reducing this. Yes, we are looking at increasing the PTR, reducing staffing at all levels, and cutting opportunities for our students. These will hurt but with Legislative support for these one-time funds, they will not be devastating.

Programs that support early learning, pre-kindergarten, and intervention are effective in achieving student success. Students enter elementary school ready to learn requiring little or no intervention when they have early learning opportunities. Those who come to our schools without it, or come with English as a second language, learning disabilities or other challenges, are brought up to grade level through our effective intervention programs. With these programs in place, KPBSD has increased our graduation rate by 10% in recent years. Please support these programs.

The most effective way to increase student success is with good teaching. The program I feel has best impacted this area is the Teacher-Mentor program. It provides a consistent evaluation, coaching, and support for that new-to-teaching educator in real time. What a gift to our children - exponentially increasing the effectiveness of their teacher in a way that improves learning for that class and each class of students throughout that teacher's career.

I understand our budget crisis and how the CBR will not provide the bridge we saved for between the low throughput of oil and the start of the gas line. A year ago, we didn't know that a barrel of oil would be down to \$50. We don't know whether it will be higher or lower next year although I hear from those in the business that it will once again be high. Regardless, we need to diversify our economy and the best way to invest in a healthy

economy is to invest in the education of Alaskans from early childhood through adult career transitions. It is their brain power that is the real driver of our economy in the near future and far beyond.

As a mother of a public school student, as a school board member, and as a 30 year educator and advocate for PreK through university education, I want you to know how much I appreciate the difficult decisions that lay before you. My plea is for wise and generous investment to create the best opportunities for Alaska's future.

Thank you,

Liz Downing



**From:** Lili Misel  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Protect Education  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 9:18:39 PM

---

Dear Finance Committee-

This is a year of hard choices and I do not envy the job of this committee. However, as you make your decisions, please keep in mind the future of Alaska.

Top priorities for the legislature this year should be funding for public education and early childhood programs. Although the Alaska budget has gone to hell with lower oil prices, the future of this state should not be fallout from those cuts. Without a well educated younger population, the state will suffer in the future. The public education system in Fairbanks is very strong and we have been very pleased with the education that our children has received. The University of Alaska also should continue to be funded. The university provides an excellent education for the youth of the state, and research completed at the campuses helps to drive the economies of their communities. Please support Pre-K through university education in the state of Alaska. Do not shortchange our future.

Medicare expansion as the governor has put forward should also be expanded. It is again in the better interest in the state to support those who need medical assistance. There is nothing worse than being ill and not being able to afford treatment and again, it helps a large portion of our state's population.

Sincerely,

Lili Misel  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**From:** [Dawn Paulson](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Widening the Net  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 12:28:35 PM

---

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in regards to the budget cuts proposed that would eliminate the Widening the Net preschool program. My daughter attending Widening the Net two years ago at Palmer High.

It was a wonderful experience for her. She was so ready for Kindergarten and has excelled at school ever since. She would not have had the opportunity for preschool if not for this program. We are a middle class, one-income family who does not qualify for any assistance.

We were so incredibly blessed and grateful for this program.

My son is turning 4 this month and I had high hopes of him being able to benefit from the program next year. I'm devastated at the possibility it will not be available. These kids need preschool! Study after study shows the benefits of preschool on graduation rates, and overall success. With graduation rates/drop out rates the way they are, I can't see how the state can not afford to pay for preschool. It can be taken further to look at the rates of kids who don't graduate and go on to get locked up. Now that's expensive!

Let's get kids graduated, let's keep them out of jail - fund preschool!

Dawn Paulson

**From:** Guada Thatcher  
**To:** House Finance; Ashley Grace; April Blevins  
**Subject:** Regarding the funds  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 11:18:49 PM

---

**“Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, for the record my name is Guada Thatcher. I am writing regarding HB36 and want to make the following points: 1.Please don't cut the funds for Preschool children need this Early Learning Education.2.I am one of the believer that theres no such thing too young to learn and having the Preschool running in Bethel the benefits of teaching them and at the end of the year seeing everything what they have learn through out the year is PRICELESS and we all know, knowledge is the key for the future for all the children.Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.**

**From:** [Kimberly Hankins](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** [Preschool Funding](#)  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 8:49:42 AM

---

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Kimberly Hankins and I am the site administrator of Joann A. Alexie Memorial School in Atmautluak, Alaska. I am writing regarding HB36 and wish to strongly encourage the continued funding of preschool and early literacy programs across the state.

Preschool and early literacy programs are essential in helping improve students' abilities in oral language, receptive language, phonological awareness skills, print knowledge, alphabet knowledge, and motivation to read. Without proper funding for preschool and early literacy programs many communities simply cannot afford to offer such services to students who both need and deserve them.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

--

Kimberly Hankins  
Site Administrator  
Joann A. Alexie Memorial School  
Atmautluak, AK  
(907) 553-5112

**From:** Noella Blankenship  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Need Prek  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 10:35:16 PM

---

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee for the record, My name is Noella Blankenship. I am writing regarding HB36 and want to make the following points that we really need Prek in Bethel, Ak especially mostly our children are low income and English is their second language. Children need to be in prek coz even mostly are in prek some of the children are still struggling because of lack of language much more if there is no prek?? Do u think these children are ready to go to Kindergarten? Second, losing a job in Bethel is very hard especially everything in this town are too expensive.  
Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

**From:** Margaret Eagleton  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** education funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 6:47:34 AM

---

To all whom it concerns:

Because I cannot attend in person, I am writing to you today to ask you to reinstate full funding to all education.

While I am the parent of a high school student in Fairbanks, my concerns range from pre-K funding all the way up through the University of Alaska across the whole state.

I have been impressed with my daughter's education to date, but I fear that this might not be the case in the future.

I, for one, would forgo my permanent fund dividend and pay taxes to ensure quality education for our youth. That is the level of my commitment to our future. What is yours?

Thank you for your consideration.

Most sincerely,

Margaret W. Eagleton  
93 Roxie Road  
Fairbanks, AK 99709  
(907) 479-3535

**From:** Angeyah Bohulano  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Reinstatement funding for Parents as Teachers Program  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 10:07:04 AM

---

Hi there,

My name is Maricel Bohulano from Juneau and my two year old daughter is currently on PAT program. I am a full time working mom so this program helps me a lot to learn about my daughters development and things I can do to boost her development. The PAT coordinator brings a book that we read every night and we do activities every visit. Every visit, me and my daughter get to bond and play together at that one hour that we all need as a family. This program also give us a chance to meet other families out there that all want their kids to have a good family foundation.

I ask to please reinstate PAT funding to support families like me to have a better understanding with early education.

Sincerely,

Maricel Bohulano

**From:** Anne Vander Naald  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Early Learning Funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 9:35:31 AM

---

Hello,

My name is Anne Vander Naald, and I am currently 7 months pregnant. I recently learned about the legislature's decision to cut funding for Early Learning. I was especially sad to hear the Parents as Teachers program is going to be cut. As a first-time new parent-to-be, I was feeling comforted by the fact that my husband and I would be able to participate in this program and receive this form of support. We live in Juneau without any family nearby and we therefore lean on our community of friends and support workers to help us navigate this new territory. I know there are many other first-time parents in the Juneau community who feel the same way I do. The current day care crisis is one indicator that more parents may be forced to stay at home and would therefore need more support - in the form of a program like the Parents as Teachers program, and others that are being cut.

Please consider this my request to work to bring back some semblance of support for new families of little ones. We need all the help we can get!

Thank you,  
Anne Vander Naald



**From:** Jessica Bethers  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Keep early learning funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 7:37:40 AM

---

Hello,

I am writing in as a concerned citizen. I understand that early learning funding is on the table to be cut. We use the Dolly Parton Imagination Library service and my daughter LOVES getting a book every month. It definitely encourages his enthusiasm for reading.

We also utilize the various activities and resources offered by AEYC from the library nights to the turf for tots night. These opportunities play a vital role in our son's socialization.

Additionally, while I am still on the waitlist for the Parents as Teachers program, I believe it to be a vital program to start children on the right path, encouraging their developmental milestones.

Please keep funding these important programs for our children.

In gratitude,

Jessica Bethers

--

Jessica Bethers  
Consciousness Cleaning  
"Holistic Cleaning with Energy Shifting"  
[www.consciousnesscleaning.com](http://www.consciousnesscleaning.com)  
907-957-6210

**From:** [Sara Miller](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Keep the early learning funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 8:25:18 AM

---

Hello,

I am writing in as a concerned citizen. I understand that early learning funding is on the table to be cut. We use the Dolly Parton Imagination Library service and my daughter LOVES getting a book every month. It definitely encourages her enthusiasm for reading. We now have a small library to pick from each night.

We also utilize the various activities and resources offered by AEYC from the library nights to the turf for tots night. These opportunities play a vital role in our daughter's socialization. Often times the winter is rainy or cold and having a dry, fun place to play with friend is great. Being a working mom-these opportunities are a great time to bond with my daughter.

Additionally, while I am still on the waitlist for the Parents as Teachers program, I believe it to be a vital program to start children on the right path, encouraging their developmental milestones.

Please keep funding these important programs for our children.

Sincerely,

Sara Miller  
[saramiller50@hotmail.com](mailto:saramiller50@hotmail.com)  
414-232-8720

**From:** [Annie Albrecht](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early learning finding  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 6:33:17 PM

---

In response to the decision to cut the early learning fund....that is a terrible idea. The more research that is done to identify where children become at risk for failing out of school....the more it has become clear that it is the earliest years (birth to age 3) that are the most critical.

My children have benefited most specifically from the imagination library program but, as a community member, I also fully support the other programs that AEYC organizes.

Please reconsider this cut and try to recognize the potential effect it will have on Alaska's future.

Sincerely,

Annie Albrecht

**From:** [Erin Felke Caf](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Subject: Keep early learning funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 8:52:21 AM

---

Hello, I am writing in as a concerned citizen. I understand that early learning funding is on the table to be cut.

I recently registered for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library service for my 2yo daughter, and I'm sorry to hear that the program might lose funding. Not only is reading an important parent / child bonding time, it also encourages language development, imagination, and enthusiasm for education.

We also utilize the various activities and resources offered by AEYC from the library nights to the turf for tots night. These opportunities play a vital role in our son's socialization.

Please keep funding these important programs for our children.  
Sincerely,

Erin Felke-Caf

**From:** [Brandy Richardson](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Craig, Alaska Public Library  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 2:01:17 PM

---

To whom it may concern,

This email is in reference to HB 72 and 73. It is to voice my concern over losing funding that has helped our library. My family has benefited so much from the programs offered through the library, specifically the ones offered through the AlaskaOWL program. We have used this resource to help our family create a garden in the temperamental Southeast. My children have used this to understand anatomy of sea life as well as other educational programs, all of this is only available because of the library and it's services. If not for the library and the services they've provided we would be limited to programs offered locally, which are few and far between because of our remote location.

My children have also been part of the Dolly Parton Imagination library. This early literacy program was simply wonderful in getting my children excited about books and literature.

It makes me sad to think these programs could be going away because of budget cuts. I realize cuts need to be made, but on behalf of my family, I'm asking you to reconsider cutting funding for our libraries which are a vital part of life here on the Prince of Wales.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Brandy Richardson

**From:** [Karen Matthias](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Funding for Best Beginnings  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 12:32:38 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee members,

I know that Alaska is facing a serious budget deficit and that you have to make tough cuts and hard choices. I hope that you will consider the effectiveness of each program and the return on investment as you make your decisions.

Early childhood education and development is vital to the future of our state if we want children to enter kindergarten ready to learn and develop into productive members of our community. **Best Beginnings** provides tools and resources to parents to ensure that success at very low cost and with considerable support from community volunteers and matching grants from foundations and corporate sponsors.

**The DEED funding to Best Beginnings is vital to its success.**

This is a long term, worthwhile and cost effective investment in our state. And it can pay off with higher graduation rates and healthier communities.

I volunteer with Anchorage Imagination Library and Best Beginnings because I care about the many children in Alaska who need access to books and the parents who need help and encouragement to read to their children.

With funding mostly from Best Beginnings, dedicated volunteers with Imagination Libraries all over the state are providing books to more than 23,000 children in Alaska. Any Imagination Library family will tell you that when that book arrives in the mail, the child demands to read it, "right now". Not only do these books encourage print awareness and brain development, but the best thing is the time in the parent's lap, feeling safe and loved. That time is so important to the emotional development of the child.

Please reinstate the full funding of \$937,500 for Best Beginnings. Thousands of children all over the state are counting on you.

Thank you for considering this request.

Karen Matthias  
Anchorage Imagination Library volunteer 2011-present

**From:** [Kathrin W McCarthy](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** cuts to early childhood and medicaid expansion  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 12:20:12 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee members:

I attended the hearing yesterday in Rm 515 and listened to many heart-felt petitions from Alaskan citizens to the committee on the proposed cuts to Parents as Teachers, Best Beginnings, and PreK programs to name a few. Head Start was not specifically mentioned.

The testimony by a few young parents on how the Parents As teachers program helped them through difficult times is relevant to Alaska on two points. 1) young families who recently moved to our state do not have the benefits of extended family support and teaching from their own family's to care and cope with a young child. 2) Many Alaskan families have been decimated by intergenerational trauma and grief. Alaskan Preschool age children have the highest rate of diagnosed PTSD of any group in the US. Thus, trauma continues in many families. The long range harms to children from abuse, neglect, child sexual abuse and abuse of women who are their mothers are serious public health issues that our state must address. The Adverse Childhood Affects Study (ACES) was obliquely referenced yesterday in testimony concerning the long range harm that early trauma and abuse cause. Negative physical and mental health outcomes occur well into adulthood and are linked to a wide range of ill health and early death. Thus doing everything you can to provide the funding to support programs that have a track record is for supporting families is a good financial investment.

I also urge the committee to accept Medicaid expansion and make medicaid available to Alaskans who will not have health insurance without it.

Thank you for your attention to this message.

Sincerely,  
Kathrin McCarthy

**From:** [nancy fresco](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** School Funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 11:05:34 AM

---

Dear members of the House Finance Budget DEED Subcommittee,

I know that the state budget is tighter than ever, and that many programs face cuts, but in some cases, pinching a penny now will cost all of us a dollar later. I am writing to ask you to consider the long-term social and economic repercussions of cutting crucial school funding.

As the mother of twin third-graders in the public school system, I can attest that our teachers are incredibly hard-working, under-paid, and under-valued individuals. Teachers are already struggling to meet the diverse needs of students who come from many different backgrounds and have many different needs. At the elementary level, classes already exceed 25 students. Trying to effectively teach this number of kids puts all the kids at a disadvantage. Now I hear that class sizes may be increased yet again. This puts educational quality at grave risk, for the brightest kids, those who are struggling, and all the children in between -- who will one day be the backbone of our society.

Furthermore, key programs are on the chopping block. As a state and as a nation, we are already falling behind in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, and everyone agrees that building a strong foundation in these subjects is crucial for our economic future. And yet programs to support these "STEM" subject are being cut. Likewise, early intervention and strong literacy programs for the youngest children can set them on a path toward success -- and yet the K-3 literacy project is under threat, as are Best Beginnings and pre-K grants. Mentoring, homework help, broadband for schools -- all these programs are of particular help to students from poorer families who may not have access to these resources at home. Cutting such resources means not offering a chance to a child who might have been the first in their family to attend college.

I beg you to fund our schools to the highest degree possible -- for now, and for the future. Thank you for your service to our state, and for your attention in this important matter.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Fresco

93 Roxie Road  
Fairbanks AK 99709  
907-479-3777



**From:** [Jeanne Kitayama](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** early childhood education is a wise investment in our future!  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 5:02:15 PM  
**Attachments:** [jensen2009\\_fig2.7.png](#)  
[ATT00001.htm](#)  
[Heckman Equation handout.pdf](#)  
[ATT00002.htm](#)

---

Dear Legislators,

Economically, socially, scientifically, and for healthy communities -- investing in early childhood education is the wisest investment we can make for our future. Educating and supporting parents of children birth to age 5 is critical, as these are the years of rapid brain development. I urge legislators to use all their power to support all early childhood funding, for a healthy future for Alaskans.

**From:** Heidi Hilmes  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB72: State funded PreK testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 2:58:02 PM

---

Hello,

I am a teacher in the early childhood community in Anchorage, Alaska. As a community member, I want to testify my support of State-funded Pre-K programs.

Pre-K programs provide a learning environment for children, as well as families. Children coming into public schools with no prior experience are so unprepared for the academic rigors of Kindergarten, as well as the highly social environment. Pre-K programs give young children the opportunity to learn foundational academic skills and social skills through guided play. Families also learn how important their role is in their child's education through home visits and family gatherings. The goal of Pre-K is to set-up children and families for a successful educational career, not just to prepare for Kindergarten.

I hope enough voices are heard on this topic, and I hope enough people grow to see how important early childhood education is in every community.

Thank you for your time.  
Sincerely,  
Heidi Hilmes

**From:** [Kristeen Gress](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Proposed Cuts to Early Childhood Education  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 4:03:13 PM

---

Honorable Legislators and Committee Members,

I am writing in response to proposed cuts by Alaskan lawmakers to our early education programs.

Yes it is time for tightening belts again, but please not in a short-sighted manner that comes at the expense of our youngest Alaskans.

We Alaskans need to remember our duty to protect and nurture the next generation of citizens. With this in mind, how can we think of cutting the very programs designed to educate the most vulnerable among us, our children, in particular the early education/preschool opportunities our state has offered to the very youngest and now threatens to take away. The programs that have been designated for cutting are the very programs that bolster our young citizens at the very beginning of their lives, when growth potential is greatest and opportunities to affect positive change yields the most reward. These programs set the youngsters on a more successful path for school and learning and eventually participatory citizenship.

I offer this plea as a concerned Alaskan citizen, a elementary and former middle school teacher and grandmother of a two-year-old who is benefitting from the current state-funded Early Childhood Education program.

Please reconsider the currently proposed legislation; do not pass a bill that strips the funding for these vital programs.

Respectfully,

Kristeen Gress

2563 Meadow Lane

Juneau, AK 99801

**From:** [Kaitee Perisich](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Please Support Early Learning Funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 4:39:21 PM

---

Hello,

I'm writing on behalf of my one year old daughter whom I want more than anything to succeed in life. So I can imagine you would understand that in order for her to have the best chance possible I want her to have the opportunity to start learning early.

Early childhood intervention programs have been shown to yield benefits in academic achievement, behavior, educational progression and attainment, delinquency and crime, and labor market success.

Please make the choice to keep early funding for Alaska's next generation.

Thank You for your Consideration,

--

Kaitee Perisich

**From:** Elisabeth Brennan  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Education Funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 2:59:48 PM

---

March 4, 2015

Dear Finance Committee,

My name is Betsy Brennan and I am a parent, community member and school board member in Nome. I would like to strongly encourage you to reinstate the one time funding cuts in the FY16 budget. Nome Public School would specifically lose \$208,000 for next school year if the one time funding is not restored. That has grave implications for our school district. I would also encourage you to not cut early learning grants and funding. Early childhood education programs are an effective investment in our most precious resource: Our Children! Even in times of difficult fiscal matters, investment in education has deep implications for our future. Please keep the children of Alaska first in your mind as you do your important work.

Sincerely,

Betsy Brennan

PO Box 1623

Nome, AK 99762

9074435470

Jeremy Gieser  
1122 Timberline Court  
Juneau, AK 99801

March 3, 2015

Representative Neuman, Co-Chair  
Representative Thompson, Co-Chair  
House Finance Committee  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives:

I am writing in support of the Parents as Teachers program. I realize that our state is in a challenging fiscal situation, which requires many difficult budgetary decisions to be made. However, I would be remiss if I did not write to advocate for a program that has been extremely important to my family this past year.

In January 2014 I became a father. My son's entrance into the world was both exhilarating and terrifying. As my wife and I began navigating parenthood, we were full of questions regarding our infant son's health and development. In an effort to hedge up any support we could, we were put on the waiting list for the Parents as Teachers program. After a few months wait, we became enrolled in the program.

This monthly visit from an early childhood educator provided an immense support to us as parents. Our educator, Melinda, monitored our son's development, physically and cognitively, and answered any questions we had (there were many!) as new parents. Among the exhaustion and isolation of being a new parent, these home visits were much anticipated and appreciated.

In addition to helping us ensure our young sons basic needs and developmental milestones were being met, the Parents as Teachers program is teaching us how to meaningfully interact with our son in ways that interest and challenge him. In all of the literature we have read, we are reminded that these interactions in the early years of a child's life are paving the way for his future and increasing his chances of social, emotional, physical, and educational success.

The Parents as Teachers program's focus on fostering families to develop a pattern of involvement in their children's educational future is creative, efficient, and proven to be effective. Please do not be remiss about our state's future generations as we navigate our way through these challenging times. I hope you will consider continuing the funding for this valuable educational program. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Gieser

**From:** [williams\\_sara](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Preschool  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 3:47:55 PM

---

Good Afternoon,

I am emailing you to urge you not to cut our preschool program. Early childhood is so important to students. As a teacher I see the benefits first hand. I have taught Preschool, kindergarten, and 1st grade and can tell the difference between a child who attended a school preschool program or did not. Coming to school is a big change for many of our students, getting in routines, staying awake, and learning or just a few of the hurdles that they face. Those who attend preschool seem to get a jump on learning and understanding how a school works. Preschool and Early Childhood classrooms are a great experiences for students especially for students with families that cannot afford to send them to a private preschool. Please do not cut the program, there are so many students benefitting from this and it will only continue to show and as a community we will reap the benefits.

Sincerely,

Sara Williams

**From:** Deb Trowbridge  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Pre-K Cuts  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 4:38:16 PM

---

Hello I am Deb Trowbridge, Acting Head Start Director at Kawerak, Inc. in Nome, AK. I am writing to the proposed Pre-K cuts. Maintaining the Pre-K funds enables Kawerak Head Start to blend funding with the state to serve 40 children and their families. Without these funds, fewer children and families will benefit from greatly needed services. Please consider how the Pre-K funds can be maintained to offer more families and children the opportunity to succeed early in life. Thank you for your time.



**From:** Ann McCann  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Funding for Best Beginnings and other Early childhood programs  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 4:09:03 AM

---

I am a Fairbanks resident convinced that focusing on early childhood education is the best expenditure that the state can make for the long-term benefit of Alaska and Alaskans. Please restore full-funding. If we need to implement an income tax to pay our bills, do it, but don't bankrupt our kids (and future).

Ann McCann  
Fairbanks

**From:** [chelseasternicki@hotmail.com](mailto:chelseasternicki@hotmail.com) on behalf of [Chelsea Sternicki](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Cc:** [efloyd@bestbeginningsalaska.org](mailto:efloyd@bestbeginningsalaska.org)  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 12:55:38 PM

---

Dear Members of the House Finance Sub-Committee,

I am writing to ask that you maintain funding for Best Beginnings. My child receives a book every month through the Imagination Library program. Although we are financially able to purchase books for her, we still really appreciate the program as it expands the content that our daughter is exposed to. More importantly, Best Beginnings provides books to many families who could not otherwise afford books for their children. In these instances, every dollar spent towards early literacy through the Best Beginnings program is invaluable.

Research shows that exposure to books during the first five years of life positively affects a child's brain development. Without such exposure children often need remediation upon entering kindergarten, which is costly for elementary schools. It seems that funding Best Beginnings is a more straightforward and effective way to prepare young children for future success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,  
Chelsea Sternicki  
[chelseasternicki@gmail.com](mailto:chelseasternicki@gmail.com)

**From:** Darrell Wayman  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Funding for Best Beginnings and Parents as Teachers  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 12:02:49 PM

---

I'm Juliana Wayman and I volunteer with the Anchorage Imagination Library which works to increase children's literacy with support from Best Beginnings. Please restore funding for Best Beginnings and Parents as Teachers.

These two programs give parents the tools and training to prepare young children to succeed in school.

This is a long term, worthwhile and cost effective investment in our state, that can pay off with higher graduation rates and healthier communities.

I volunteer and I'm here today because I care about the many children in Alaska who need access to books and the parents who need help and encouragement to read to their children.

With funding mostly from Best Beginnings, dedicated volunteers with Imagination Libraries all over the state are providing books to more than 20,000 children in Alaska. Any Imagination Library family will tell you that when that book arrives in the mail, the child demands to read it, "right now". Not only do these books encourage print awareness and brain development, but the best thing, is the time in the parent's lap, feeling safe and loved. That time is so important to the emotional development of the child.

Please restore the funding for Best Beginnings and Parents as Teachers. Thousands of children all over the state are counting on you.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Juliana Wayman

Chair, Advisory Team

Anchorage Imagination Library

**From:** Julie Reynolds  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Testimony from Cordova from 3/4/15 hearing  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 10:28:15 PM

---

My name is Julie Reynolds, I live in Cordova and I represent my family.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our testimonies today.

Please continue the funding for Best Beginnings which helps fund the Cordova Imagination Library and Puddle Jumpers music class. My five-year old loved getting the monthly book until she turned five and now my 7 month old son has received his first book. Especially for remote communities and those without a library, these books can be a rare treasure to young children and build the foundation for eager readers to have a lifelong love of reading and learning.

On another note, please continue funding for year-round ferry service in Cordova. Our remote community depends on this service for medical travel, school sports, supplies for goods in local stores, tourism and jobs.

Thank you again for taking the time to hear our testimony.

Sincerely,  
Julie Reynolds

Sent from Windows Mail

**From:** Carol Brice Family Center  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** re: State of Alaska budget  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 9:31:01 AM

---

Hello... I just want to be on the record that I do not support going below the level of the governor's proposed budget. For instance, such things as doing away with the

Matching grant program and cutting Alaska Legal Services budget by 40% is extremely short-sighted. There are many other examples. (Best Beginnings, etc.) Eliminating or substantially decreasing the level of these services is only going to cost more in the long run. Thank you.

Karl Greer, Operations Manager

The Carol H. Brice Family Center

**From:** Maligiaq  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Fwd: Best Beginnings  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 5:24:14 PM

---

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Maligiaq <[maligiaq@rocketmail.com](mailto:maligiaq@rocketmail.com)>  
**Date:** 2015 martsi 4 17:20:27 GMT-9  
**To:** "Inscfin@akleg.gov" <[Inscfin@akleg.gov](mailto:Inscfin@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings

My name is Maligiaq Padilla and I'm a father of two children's. 17 months and 4 year old.

Last year I work with 24 different schools in Alaska, teaching cultural values, and traditional skills. Including Qayaqs and hunting tools. Communities population from 60-to anchorage sizes.

I understand economic hard times, but I'm asking the committee to restore funds for best beginnings and support young children's.

As we know Best Beginnings is the statewide sponsor of Imagination library. Imagination Library is very important for me and my children's. The books help to teach my children in a lot of ways to develop their brains, also speaking multiple languages at home.

People in Kotzebue with the families needs opportunities to get books, especially high quality books.

Thank you,  
Maligiaq Padilla

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Christa Womack](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Please Reinstate Funds for Early Education Programs  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 12:41:37 AM

---

March 5, 2015

The Honorable House Finance Committee Members

Alaska State Capitol

Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Honorable House Finance Committee Members:

As a parent, social work student and concerned citizen of Juneau, I am respectfully requesting that you reinstate the funds to support Parent's as Teachers, Pre-K and Best Beginnings. It is crucial that the state continues to invest in early childhood development programs.

Research clearly shows that the early years are critical in a child's development. In the early years of life, a child's brain growth and development is accelerating at a rapid pace. During these years, it is important that children are provided with nurturing and rich learning activities that stimulate the brain. When children have these experiences, they are more likely to succeed in school and other areas in life.

Prevention programs, such as Parents as Teachers educates parents on the developmental milestones of children. This program also provides an avenue for families to connect with each other which provides a network of support. Two important protective factors for reducing child abuse and neglect in our State is parental knowledge of child development and social connections in times of need. The Parents as Teachers program provides an avenue to build these protective factors in families.

I hope you will consider the long term costs of cutting Parents as Teachers, Pre-K and Best Beginnings programs out of the budget.

Please reinstate the funds to support these programs during difficult financial times. If you are looking for solutions to the budget, consider having State employees pay for their own unemployment insurance instead of it being a fringe benefit paid by the State.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Christa Womack



Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, my name is Kim Erikson, representing Nome Public Schools. I teach for Nome Public Schools but the children that I teach attend class in the Kawerak Head Start building. The public school collaborates with the Head Start through the Pre-K Grant.

I am writing regarding the restoration of the Pre-K Grant. First I would like to say that the teachers don't just educate the children but the teachers also educate many parents. The teachers help get the student and family ready for the transition into the "The Big School" which is the Nome Public School district. We have seen great improvements with the students and the families.

One example is about a little boy that started school when he was 3. He started our program with crying and screaming every morning. Mom was struggling with life issues. She had 4 children in the home and the fourth was a new baby. She is a single mom and she was trying to take college courses. We helped the family deal with all these new transitions. When this little boy started school the next year, the teacher explained how important it was for him to learn. He needed to learn so he could go to the big school. There were a few days when his mom couldn't get up and get him to school but he made his way to school on his own. He was so proud of his learning. His mom has now finished her classes and he is in 1<sup>st</sup> grade as a proud learner. I can't imagine him starting kindergarten without having certified teachers to give him and his family the proper guidance to be successful in "The Big School".

I truly believe the Pre-K grant is preparing many children and families to be successful when entering the school district.

Please help us support our children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

**From:** Aldean Kilbourn  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** testimony for FY2016 Budget bill  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 12:10:49 PM

---

I am not currently where I can come testify, so I am writing this instead.

I am very concerned to hear that the House Finance Committee has recommended elimination of Alaska OWL (Online With Libraries) and Live Homework Help from the State Library's budget.

Basically what you are saying when you eliminate these items is that you are not interested in those in the state who don't have access to good broadband width to access the Internet. As a legislator, you have a responsibility to represent your constituents locally, but also the state as a whole. It is reprehensible for you to cast off those who don't live in cities like Anchorage, Fairbanks, & Juneau, where there is a tax base and good access to wide broadband. Three quarters of the public libraries in Alaska can't afford the bill to have good broadband in their communities. Many of these library patrons do not have Internet service at home and depend solely on the library for technical resources. Technology is so important in these communities where there is no cell phone service and communication is dependent on landlines. Think about this when you decide what to do: 2013 figures show the mean download speed for Alaska libraries was 5.8 Mbps while the national mean download speed was 57.4 Mbps. Current state funds leverage about \$2 million in federal E-Rate funds for broadband to Alaska public libraries.

We all recognize that budget cuts are going to have to come, but your job is to see that ways to bring all Alaskans together are supported and funded.

In 2014, Homework Help funding provided tutoring sessions to 29,279 Alaskans. I recommend Homework Help to all of my friends with children, and without exception, they have commented back what a big help it was since they couldn't provide their children with how to answer their questions. I challenge each of you to go sign up and try Homework help - it is a very positive experience. To go from a mere 5073 tutoring experiences in 2008 to the almost 30,000 tutoring experiences in 2014 says the program works. Something you also don't seem to know is that after every tutoring session there is a survey that wants to know how well the tutoring served a patron. These are the responses:

98% Helps them complete homework

96% More confident about their studies

96% Helps improve their grades

98% Would recommend to a friend

Gov. Walker's FY2016 budget includes \$719,800 for Online With Libraries (OWL). Many local libraries in smaller and remote communities are located within the school and OWL offers much needed additional resources to students. When you can provide for both educational needs and community needs of Internet bandwidth, you're using the same dollars twice, an economically smart move. Even if a public library could afford the high cost of Internet bandwidth necessary to do video conferencing, then there's no money for tech help or equipment to get the conferencing going. The state's funding means that OWL can provide for a connection to the bigger population centers with those smaller, Bush communities.

As you work on the FY2016 Budget bill, please keep funding for OWL, Homework Help and the additional early childhood literacy initiatives within the State Library's budget.

Sincerely,

Aldean Kilbourn  
3217 Riverview Drive

Fairbanks, AK 99709

If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn't be called research, would it? - Albert Einstein

**From:** Judy Andree  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Budget Cuts to Early Education and Medicaid Expansion Adoption  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 11:59:34 AM

---

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

You are holding hearings this week on the State Budget, and given the current budget difficulties, you have some difficult choices to make. I am urging you to vote in favor of reinstating funding for Early Childhood Education, particularly funding for Parents As Teachers, Best Beginning programs, and Pre-K Programs, as well as the funding that would allow Medicaid Expansion to proceed. I have bundled these two issues together because they both have something very important in common: they represent the needs of those in our society who are the most vulnerable and have the softest voices. Children are the basis for the future, and good programs that help to make them stronger learners and more confident citizens can only strengthen society and our democracy. But the children can't speak out for themselves, they can't yet vote; they can only hope that someone will speak for them.

In addition, those who would be eligible for health care assistance under an expanded Medicaid program are low-income citizens, many of whom work full-time and often overtime at a second job. A minor illness can send them into a financial crisis, and not seeking medical help immediately due to inability to pay can cause that minor problem to grow into a major medical crisis. We have a federal government eager to help with this expansion and pay for at least 90% of the cost. Right now the State of Alaska is paying 100%. If we need a piece of legislation to get this going (as I have read was mentioned by some committee members), then I suggest looking at HB 18. This bill addresses Medicaid Expansion, but to date it has not had any action after initial referral.

Funding these two areas--early childhood education and expansion of Medicaid--should be a priority for a society based on equality, life, and liberty.

Thank you for your service to the citizens of Alaska.

--

Judy Andree  
5985 Lund Street  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
907-780-6767 (home)  
907-321-1559 (cell)

**From:** Kara Winegar  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Early childhood education funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 6:59:08 PM

---

Please consider funding early childhood education. Our children are Alaska's future. Early childhood education and support gives families and our community tools to raise healthy, happy and capable individuals. I understand we need to make cuts, but let's hold support for our youngest citizens sacred.

Thank you,  
Kara Hollatz  
John Hollatz  
Nina Hollatz (age 3)  
Owen Hollatz (age 7 months)

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Michelle Weaver](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early Childhood is critical to Alaska's future  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 6:49:21 PM

---

To whom it may concern,

I am both a parent and an educator, and I am dismayed that early childhood programs are at risk of losing funding in the upcoming fiscal year. I have a BA in Elementary Education and an M Ed in Early Childhood Education. Throughout my years of study, I have read various research that explains the importance of early intervention in helping children reach expected grade-level goals. The longer we wait before implementing interventions, the more costly and time consuming they are to achieve the same results.

This is why programs such as Parents as Teachers are vital to Alaska's success in the future. The PAT program provides parents with the support they need to help their children begin high-quality learning from birth. Without these supports, many families would not have the tools they need to prepare their children for school. These children would then be more likely to enter kindergarten lacking essential skills in pre-reading, with poor vocabularies, and beginning math awareness. Once in kindergarten, extra assistance would be needed to help ensure all children are where they are expected to be by the high standards of our nation's education system. If these deficits are not immediately identified in kindergarten, then interventions would be required later on, and as I have said, this gets more and more expensive.

The Dolly Parton Imagination library is also an important tool in preparing Alaska's children for school. A child's early exposure to books is a strong indicator for their later reading skills. Many families do not have the resources, financial or cognitive, to select high quality books for their child and have a home library. By having books sent directly to the home, all families can have a chance to expose their children to books, and begin developing a lifelong love of reading.

I currently have a 7 month old daughter. I expected my degrees in education would adequately prepare me for being a parent, but I am extremely grateful to have the support of Melinda, my Parents as Teachers Parent Educator. Having a newborn is hard, and I struggled initially with how to help my daughter learn from the beginning. I knew I should have been doing more, but I felt clueless as to what that would be, particularly through my parent-of-a-newborn sleep deprivation. At our first visit with Melinda, my daughter was just 3 weeks old. Melinda explained the Parents as Teachers program to me, and explained that much of our visits would take place on the floor, where we could play and interact as parent and child. This blew my mind. At that point, it simply had never occurred to me to play with my daughter on the floor- I knew tummy time was important, but somehow never thought about placing her on her back to play. I'm sure I would have figured it out eventually, but my daughter would likely have missed out on valuable opportunities for learning and motor development.

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher, but parents need support in order to do their best. Waiting until elementary school is too late- teachers are busy and parenting styles are much more ingrained. If we want Alaska to have a future as a player on the national and world stage, we need to make sure our kids are prepared. High quality, early education is the

best, most effective, and most economical way to achieve this goal.

Thank you for your time,

Michelle Weaver

463-3832

**From:** [Sarah San Martin](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** State Funded Pre-K  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 3:52:12 PM

---

Hello,

I am writing this on behalf of all early learning programs, but especially the state funded Pre-K classrooms.

I have been teaching Pre-K for 4 years now and have never felt such a pride as I do with this age group. Every single day, being able to work with children who need these early learning opportunities brings a fulfillment to my job. I know first hand how important these classes are to so many. Families itch to get their child into a Pre-K program and we always have families on our waiting lists.

It amazes me every year where these children start and where they end up ready and beyond for Kindergarten. We are giving these children the tools to succeed in their school years ahead. I have had families cry with tears of joy and amazement at what their child is able to accomplish. I feel that these programs are really a necessity for so many children to succeed. We are able to take children and work with them so that at the start of Kindergarten certain areas have already been targeted and skills have been learned where they will be far less likely to fall behind. It fills me with a satisfaction and joy to give parents tools on how to work with their child at home and offer any help I can. I have parents every year say how important this program was to their child and family. I have never worked any where else where I have felt the importance as I do with Pre-K. I fully believe that if there were more opportunities to give Early Education a priority, we would see far more success out of children in their years to come and throughout their K-12 grades and on through later years in life. Early Childhood Education is such an important job and I do not take lightly what I am doing on a daily basis. The children I work with may be at disadvantage if they didn't have the opportunity to come to our school. Each year, my class leaves Pre-K well equipped to take on elementary education at a level children just coming into school may not be at.

It is important for me and for my families I work with, that Pre-K funding not be cut. This would be devastating to so many.

Thank you,

Sarah San Martin



**From:** William Updegrave  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Early Childhood Education funding  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 5:51:13 PM

---

You've heard from many others on the issue of funding for pre-school and other early childhood programs. I would like to add my support for maintaining and perhaps increasing funding for programs for the pre-school age children of Alaska.

As a member of the Lower Kuskokwim School Board, I am concerned with the fact that most of our students enter school with a deficit of one or more years below grade level. LKSD does its best to erase this deficit, but the money we are forced to spend on remedial programs would produce better results if it were spent on pre-school education. Effective pre-school education has the potential to bring most students up to school ready status, freeing up K-12 resources to advance students a year or more at grade level.

Money spent on early childhood education is an investment which pays large dividends in reducing the need for later K-12 funding and which pays immeasurable dividends in the lives of Alaska's children.

Please at the very least maintain the current level of funding for pre-school programs.

William Updegrave  
PO Box 1872

**From:** [Jeanne Kitayama](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** early childhood education is a wise investment in our future!  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 5:02:15 PM  
**Attachments:** [jensen2009\\_fig2.7.png](#)  
[ATT00001.htm](#)  
[Heckman Equation handout.pdf](#)  
[ATT00002.htm](#)

---

Dear Legislators,

Economically, socially, scientifically, and for healthy communities -- investing in early childhood education is the wisest investment we can make for our future. Educating and supporting parents of children birth to age 5 is critical, as these are the years of rapid brain development. I urge legislators to use all their power to support all early childhood funding, for a healthy future for Alaskans.

**From:** [amy.george](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Stop Early Childhood Education Cuts!!  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 8:48:22 PM

---

My name is Amy George and I vote. My address is 3314 Woodland Park Dr, Anchorage AK 99517. I oppose the budget cuts proposed that will eliminate the Parents as Teachers Program in Anchorage. Parents as Teachers serves anyone in the Anchorage area. They are a parent education and support program. Parents learn to teach and prepare their children for school at home. By the time children in this program get to Kindergarten they are well prepared to succeed in school. This is a home visiting program that is voluntary and open to everyone who has a child or children prenatal to age 5. When started in this program prenatally or as soon as possible, children and families experience healthier births and less risk of child abuse and neglect, as well as better outcomes in public schools. Parents as Teachers uses parent education and child development information to make parents better prepared to discipline and teach their children. This means less OCS involvement and children who are prepared to succeed in school and beyond. Parents as Teachers also serves as a resource and referral agency to families in need in the Anchorage area.

Do not cut Parents as Teachers from the budget!! This is a vitally important resource to families and children in Anchorage.

Sincerely,  
Amy George

**From:** Masha Sk  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Regarding Cuts to Early Childhood Education Funding  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 8:12:36 AM

---

Dear members of the committee,

I would humbly urge you to re-consider cutting funding to Early Childhood Education programs. While I fully support the cuts sustained by the state government bureaucracy I can not get behind reducing services to our children. Alaska is a unique and wonderful place to live and raise a family. However, it is also sparsely and unevenly populated, preventing private sector forces to create childcare and education opportunities as is the case in the lower 48s.

As a mother of two boys under 3 working full-time and a single parent 6-month out of the year, I have to deal with lack of early childhood services in Juneau on a daily basis. As such, I can also testify just how important Best Beginnings, Imagination Library, Family Nights are the families in Juneau. These programs are cornerstones of early childhood development in Juneau and there are no private sector substitutes for them. It is clear that due to falling oil revenues the state has few resources to pay for these programs, but please understand, if they are gone - there is nothing left, even for the parents, like myself, who are in a position to pay. The state of Alaska has the infrastructure in place to reach every community no matter how remote and give them access to those services. No private player can do that, not now, and now is when we need them, because those early years are so crucial, we can't afford to miss them.

As far as funding is concerned - if you don't have the revenues, then TAX US! It may be a strange position for a republican but when it comes to educating my children there are no sacred cows. Simply put government in the state of Alaska is best equipped and has the best reach to run these programs and at least this citizen is willing to pay for them through my taxes. So in summary - take my PFD, levy a special tax, but don't take away crucial programs and undermine the future of our children.

Respectfully,

Maria Skuratovskaya

--

*Help Ikirwa School fund the next classroom building. Support us at  
<http://www.ikirwa.org>*

**From:** Melanie Wahl  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB72  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 6:06:48 AM

---

I am a concerned citizen about the future of Best Beginnings in Alaska and the funding that is about to be cut to this program.

We are recipients of the Anchorage Imagination Library books each month, attend AIL's children events around Anchorage and we want this to continue.

Early education is key! Please don't cut funding to this program and others of the like, especially Parents as Teachers and Pre-K programs. I am waiting and hoping that a preschool will get funded for Rogers Park Elementary so my daughter will have a neighborhood preschool to attend in the next couple of years.

Thank you,  
Melanie Wahl

**From:** Patton, Jessica  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Funding for Early Learning  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 10:55:48 AM

---

My name is Jessica Patton, Juneau resident, and I am a single mother of an almost 3 year old. I am asking you to please reinstate full funding for the early learning programs, such as Parents As Teachers and Pre-K. Early learning is extremely important and it helps set our young ones up for success! Having my Parents As Teachers meetings has been beyond helpful on getting an idea of what is developmentally appropriate, what I can do to resolve issues if there were any, and age-appropriate activities I can do with my child to encourage her learning! Her development is assessed periodically and it's very good to know where she is at during this critical time in her development! She is just reaching her 3rd birthday and will soon be leaving the program, but I would love to know that this program is going to exist for future parents of young children and babies!

~~Do the right thing!~~ Keep funding alive for these important, community-impacting programs! They are a positive thing for our community!

**From:** Nome Preschool  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Testimony regarding the elimination of the Pre-K Grant  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 8:05:36 PM

---

“Committee Chair, Members of the committee, for the record my name is Jiorgia Clark, representing Nome Preschool Association. I am writing regarding the *Department of Education & Early Development FY 2016 House Finance Budget Subcommittee Narrative Report* and want to make the following points:

Nome Preschool has been included in the Pre-K Grant for many years. The Pre-K grant is on the list of items to be cut from the budget for fiscal year 2016 for the Department of Education and Early Development.

I am sure you have reviewed data showing that students who leave preschool classrooms included in the Pre-K Grant outperform most children who have no preschool experience at all. I won't include our specific data regarding the students from Nome Preschool because it has been an intricate part of the checks and balances written into the grant each year of our participation. I will share with you that the Pre-K Grant fills a void that is impossible to replicate.

The most notable component of the grant is a certified teacher, hired by Nome Public Schools and funded by the Pre-K Grant, teaching the students at Nome Preschool. Nome Preschool is a small local institution which has served the young learners of Nome for nearly 45 years. As a small independent educational entity, Nome Preschool does not have the financial capacity to employ a certified teacher at a justifiable rate of pay. In fact, prior to the grant the job of teaching children and running the preschool business was the act of one employee who tirelessly managed all elements of the keeping the preschool functioning from planning and executing lessons to thawing frozen pipes in the dead of winter all for a very uncompetitive salary. Our current budget is partially supported by tuition, but relies heavily on donations and fundraising just to keep the doors open. The Nome Preschool simply cannot afford to replicate what the grant provides. What we are left with is an inferior model that breeds burn-out and inconsistency, two things that keep the preschool from meeting its inherent objective of readying students for kindergarten and beyond.

The Pre-K Grant frees the preschool teacher to focus singularly on the needs of her developing students separate from the business of running the preschool. Because the Pre-K Grant requires the teacher to be certified, this person is someone pedagogically prepared for the task, not just a person who feels they like working with small children. Having a person who is specifically trained to oversee the educational experience is an unparalleled advantage.

To remove the grant sends Nome Preschool back to era where the teacher is negotiating two worlds - academic and business. Having to manage all aspects of the preschool invariably limits the instructor's ability to attend to and nurture the academic progress of his/her students with the same attention. The outcome would most certainly be a less effective preschool climate sending children a little less prepared to kindergarten in the future. Over the long term Nome slips back into a pattern of failure notorious in rural Alaskan communities.

To winnow this grant to the threshing floor erodes what the State of Alaska has asked K-12 schools to accomplish - proficiency. Stripping a valuable asset like a certified teacher will

have negative repercussions for teachers and administrators in our local school system who are left to make up the difference in the year ahead.

Nome has begun to set a standard in rural Alaska for academic rigor. It is outpacing other hub communities which, I believe, starts with its attention to early education. I ask that each of you think of the 35 children of Nome Preschool who are growing and learning under the direction of Ms. Aisha Talburt, their certified teacher provided through the grant, and reconsider your choice to eliminate the Pre-K Grant. The 35 children currently under her care WILL arrive at kindergarten prepared to meet the demands set before them. I cannot say the same for the children who follow if, indeed, the grant is cut.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

Jiorgia Clark  
Nome Preschool Director  
[nomepreschool@yahoo.com](mailto:nomepreschool@yahoo.com)  
907-443-2943



**From:** Andrea Bateman  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Testimony to restore Best Beginnings funding to the state budget  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 2:15:50 PM

---

I am a pediatrician, a mom, and a member of the Advisory Team of the Anchorage Imagination Library, a program of Best Beginnings. I am asking that you restore funding to Best Beginnings in the state budget.

Every summer I see children in my office for their kindergarten checkup, and every year I see kids who, at age 5, don't know their ABC's and can't count to ten. We know that children who start school this far behind sometimes never catch up. Imagination Library is a cost-effective program that gives children like this the chance to learn at home, with their parents, and be ready to read and learn at kindergarten entry. Every child in our program receives a free, high-quality, developmental-appropriate book in the mail every month, from the time they are enrolled until their fifth birthday. That means enrolled children will start school with a library of almost 60 books in their home! What amazing thing to give a child.

The best part of this program is that almost 100% of the funds that are supplied by Best Beginnings go DIRECTLY to purchasing books. The Anchorage Imagination Library currently serves almost 10,000 children in the Anchorage area, and it is entirely run by volunteers. Only a small portion of our funding goes to items such as printing and mailings.

I challenge you to find a program with such a big impact at such a small overhead.

I ask you to think about what it will mean to Alaskan families to not have Imagination Library books in their homes.

I want you to think about reading with your children, or remember back to when your parents read to you, and how important that is to a child.

Please reconsider your decision to cut the funding to Best Beginnings.

Sincerely,

Andrea Bateman, M.D.

Latouche Pediatrics

Anchorage Imagination Library Advisory Team/Family Engagement Chair

**From:** Audrey Buma  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings and early education  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 4:03:23 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing in the hopes to help convince you to not cut early education funding out of the budget. Please do not cut Best Beginnings, Parents as Teacher or Pre-kindergarten grants. As a mother of two small children I can't imagine not having the help these organizations have given. It is important to help children and their families at this stage in life so they have a better future. These early years are so important to having functional hard working adults later.

I was talking to my 5 year old son about why we were going to the hearing on Wednesday. We ended up talking about the Dolly Parton Imagination Library books, I told him his brother would no longer get them if the cuts happen. He looked at me with great concern and said "Mommy that is really mean of them to do that." Cole (5) has received those books once a month for the last year or so. He looked so forward to them when they came in the mail and I can't count how many times my husband and I have read them to him. He loves to have me read his little brother Owen's (7 months) books now.

Please reconsider and think of all the Alaskan children that these cuts will hurt.

Sincerely,

Audrey Buma  
Juneau AK

**From:** Katie Conover  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings funding  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 6:08:33 PM

---

Cutting funding from Best Beginnings will negatively impact young children- directly and immediately. Since 2009 I have been involved with Imagination Library, one of the many programs supported by Best Beginnings. This program provides developmentally appropriate books to families with children under 5 years of age, free of charge, in the mail each month. Dolly Parton and the Dollywood Foundation cover all the costs of the books, local communities need only raise money for the cost of postage. For 6 years I have been raising money, applying for grants and assisting in the administration of the program for over 3000 children as a volunteer. We have been organizing family involvement events, educating parents on child development and supporting literacy in these early readers as volunteers. There are close \$0 spent on admin costs. This could not be done without the grants and support from Best Beginnings. Many of our volunteers work full time jobs and raise families in the Mat-Su. Some volunteers are retired educators that just keep giving. The feedback from Imagination Library families at our events and from online are clear- Mat-Su needs this program. While a preschool programs statewide may not be economically feasible at this time, Imagination Library is a positive and effective step in the early childhood direction and one we can afford. It is the best "bang for our buck". Please fund Best Beginnings and Imagination Library.

Thank you,  
Katie Conover

**From:** Laura Cisneros  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings Funding  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 1:00:02 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee members,

I am writing to you today as a mom first, and a Best Beginnings employee second.

Frequently, we don't know what we don't know. When my son was 3 years old I was introduced to Imagination Library and Best Beginnings. Through the information provided through this program and organization, I learned that my husband and I had been doing a lot of things right. I also learned that there was **so much more** we could be doing to give my child the best start possible in life.

We put the information we received from Best Beginnings and Imagination Library into practice in my home and are seeing the results. My son, now 7, started kindergarten a year early and continues to excel in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade this year.

One reason that compelled me to join the Best Beginnings team was to contribute to the efforts of the organization and its partners in helping parents like me learn what they don't know. This is accomplished through delivery of free books, family activities, public awareness efforts, trainings, professional development opportunities, and more.

**Best Beginnings and its partners positively impact tens of thousands of Alaska children's lives.** As a result, I respectfully request that you restore funds to Best Beginnings at the amount in the Governor's budget.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Respectfully,

Laura Cisneros

Project Manager, Best Beginnings

**From:** [Mitzi Reynolds](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings Funding  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 7:41:30 PM

---

Although I have moved from the state, it makes me sad to learn that, once again, Best Beginnings is at risk of being unfunded. My career was school administration in bush Alaska and I know that rural kids don't get the same start as those in the more populated areas.

Please don't put those children more at risk in trade for the relatively small number of dollars it will 'save.'

Best Beginnings is run on a shoe string, as it is. The amount of good that comes from that program is multiplied exponentially as parents learn to work with their children and support their healthy growth. When those children become parents, the good will continue...

Please, PLEASE do not cut funding for Best Beginnings in Alaska~

Thank you,

Mitzi Reynolds

**From:** Imel, Ray  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Begin Again!  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 12:59:56 PM

---

I'm writing to ask to you cut the funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and Pre-K. I have been a teacher for 20 years in the Juneau School District. I have one student in middle school right now. I can tell you these programs are a waste of time and money. Well, my experiences and plenty of research are pretty clear that these things aren't a waste of time and money, but, still, the kids will never know. And that is key here. They won't be able to blame us if we keep this quiet. Let's kick this can down the road. Better to fully fund prisons and treatment programs, that's where they'll end up. Call me a glass half empty person, but the way I see it. By the time they figure out we are to blame, we'll be long gone. I hope you'll join me in my new group of ageing road runners, we have already cut PE so the kids won't be able to keep up. We had to make hard choices. Tough luck buddy. I mean even if we had the money, we shouldn't spend it on them. They are after all, our future, where none of us live, because we are in the present. And what are the chances they are going to take care of us when we are old? Right, we'll be lucky if we can even get a kidney if we need one. Since we haven't saved or invested enough to care for even ourselves, we need to start running and keep running, keep our heads down and run like...

--  
CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: The information contained in this message is confidential information intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or the employee or agent responsible to deliver it to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any release, dissemination, distribution, or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited.

If you have received this communication in error, please notify the author immediately by replying to this message and delete the original message.

**From:** Sarah Sjostedt  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** best beginnings  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 5:21:06 PM

---

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the best beginnings program. As a concerned citizen and Registered Nurse working in the Emergency room I see the value of early education. Developmentally early education is one of the best indicators for future success in both education and society. It is essential that Alaska maintain safety nets and rich educational experiences for all of its citizens, especially its young and most vulnerable.

I am currently pursuing a Family Nurse Practitioner Program at University of Alaska Anchorage, with the intention to practice in Alaska. I know that as a future APRN I will encourage my patients and parents to enroll in early education programs like best beginnings and head start, as they have been well studied to improve outcomes for children and families. It saddens me that the house finance is considering cutting funding to such vital programs.

Please reconsider funding best beginnings, the imagination library, and other early education programs. We are in tough financial times, but cutting education is not the answer. To remain and industry leader our state needs well educated and bright youth to address the problems of the future, they may not be well equipped to do this without programs like Best Beginnings.

Thank you,  
Sarah Sjostedt, RN BSN (and future APRN).

**From:** [Andrea Hilbert](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early Learning Funding  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 5:49:05 PM

---

Please continue to support Best Beginnings, the Imagination Library, Family Nights, and Parents as Teachers!

My daughter loves getting the books every month and we just recently started participating the Parents as Teachers program. I know it will have a big impact on my daughters learning and development.

If these programs are cut I believe it will have a big impact on Alaska's families.

Thank you,

Andrea Hilbert



**From:** Brian Buma  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Best Beginnings and early childhood educational funding  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 5:20:40 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee,

I'm quite concerned about the cuts to early childhood educational funding which are being considered. While these are quite difficult times financially, cutting education – during the most critical period for education in a child's life – is counterproductive. It seems expedient, certainly, but the effects will linger for far longer than the current budget crisis. The situation is already difficult for parents given the cost of living in Alaska, low availability of childcare, and low-funding to schools. The resources that early childhood educational funding brings about are incredibly important. As Alaska slowly transitions to a less extraction based economy, the importance of education rises dramatically - these kids need these resources to succeed in Alaska.

I'm the father of two kids, one five years old, one seven months. The five year old has been utilizing these funds in the form of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program, which sends a book each month to young kids. You probably know how excited kids get when they get some actual mail – that is directly translated to getting a book, which then becomes a treasure to be read over and over. It's at the point now where my five year old wants us to read his younger brothers books to him, because he's excited the younger one is getting these treats – and that's just one of the programs funded by early childhood programs.

The benefits are disproportional to the costs, and the lingering damage that cutting these programs would do will far outlast the current budget crunch (not to mention the difficulty of reinstating these programs if cut). Please don't cut these programs.

I'm happy to chat more about this, don't hesitate to call.

Brian Buma

-----  
Brian Buma, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Forest Ecology  
University of Alaska Southeast

Ph: 907-796-6410

**From:** [Cheryl Zeeck](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early Education Funding  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 2:15:11 PM

---

Hello,

I am a Juneau parent writing in regards to the recent proposed cuts in early education funding. I realize that budgeting for an entire state must be extremely difficult, but I believe there has to be a way to keep funding important programs like PAT, Best Beginnings, and the Dolly Parton Library. These programs help in the social, emotional, and educational development of children, who are the future of Alaska. Today's culture is very different than it has been in the past: with technology growing so quickly, more parents working full time, and people being busier than ever, it is truly a challenge for parents to make the time to help their children develop healthy habits, good communication skills, and a strong knowledge base. These programs that depend on state funding help parents shape future Alaskans into model citizens. I urge you to see the funding as an investment, much like a college savings account. I'm sure the the return the state gain in the future with a strong workforce will outweigh the sacrifice the state may have to make in other budget areas. Thank you for reconsidering these cuts.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl Zeeck

**From:** [Irene Bortnick](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early Childhood Budget Cuts  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 5:39:49 PM

---

To whom it may concern:

As a former preschool teacher, 20 year ASD kindergarten teacher, ASD mentor and Early Childhood UAA adjunct professor, I am dismayed at the proposed cuts to Best Beginnings and other early childhood programs. In the Infant and Toddler Development class (birth to 3 years old) that I teach, I stress the importance of early care and education. All the research backs this up. I know that our state is stressed with financial challenges at this time but in the long run it will cost much more if we do not at the very least keep the current level of funding. In fact, we should be increasing access to quality early care and education. From a financial standpoint alone, it makes sense to fund programs that support our youngest citizens and their caregivers; from a social/psychological perspective, it is imperative.

Sincerely,

Irene Bortnick

**From:** [Lesa Thomas](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Please, Something else to consider  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 8:29:35 PM

---

Attn. House Finance Committee:

Re: Continued Funding of Best Beginnings, for Pre-K, and Parents as Teachers

The task you face, of finding ways to close gaps in the budget, is doubtless a difficult one. As you address your task, please consider, preserving the future. By this I mean, please do not take funds from youth programs. These programs help to guarantee the future of the state, offering a foundation for functioning citizens.

### **Pre K**

Preschool is so big. I am a reading teacher. I will tell you that not every child needs preschool. Some children come from a home with a very high value of reading and education and those children may not need preschool. But some do. Many do. And badly.

Many children do not have special needs, physically, cognitively or behaviorally and they may not need preschool. But some do. Many do.

Many children **need** preschool. They need an opportunity to prepare for kindergarten. They need a foundation on which to build academic and social skills. They may need some structure in their life. They need every opportunity to be successful. So much learning can take place pre-K. Please do not take it away. There is plenty research showing the advantages of preschool. Many will be quoting it to you. Please listen to these people.

The education system needs preschool. Pre-K education is an important foundation for the children who need it. It is an opportunity for focused small groups, necessary interventions and so much more. It is preparation for success. Please do not cut Pre-K funding.

### **Parents as Teachers**

Parents are the first teachers, and Parents as Teachers, provides parents with some wonderful tools. Where Pre-K may not be available in rural settings, guidance to parents to help prepare

their children is the next best thing. Please continue to fund Parents as Teachers.

### **Best Beginnings**

Please consider keeping funding for Best beginnings. My personal experience with best beginnings is my own children receiving Imagination Library books every month. They loved it and looked forward to it from as long as they can remember. They value books and had continued to stay excited about reading.

My professional experience is having seen children who have no access to books before entering public school. Children love books, being read to and simply just turning their way through the pictures. Imagine, though, children without books. Not being able to touch the few books a house has because they are not children's books. They would have not concept of the workings of the machine, let alone print. Did you know children do actually have to learn at some point how to hold a book? They have to learn which direction to turn the pages. That the pictures go with the story you are telling them, and eventually that the glyphs on the page help to tell a story.

Simply having books access to books creates countless opportunities to prepare future readers. Please continue to fund Best Beginnings.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Lesa Thomas

Wasilla, AK

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Melinda Myers](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of Early Childhood  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 12:04:57 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing to you today as a parent and supporter of young children in hope that you will restore funding for early childhood; specifically for Parents As Teachers, Pre-Kindergarten and Best Beginnings. History has shown that when there are tough times with any budget, programs in support of children and families are usually the first to be cut because they are not seen as a critical component to a strong economy. I want you and our State to think differently and restore those cuts because it does affect our economy.

For every parent that learns strategies to bond with their child and support his/her development through Parents As Teachers, that's one more parent whose child is not in the custody of the Office of Children's Services.

For every child that is able to participate in a State funded Pre-Kindergarten program, that's one more child who has had the foundation to graduate high school and not end up on welfare.

And for communities that have created an early childhood partnership or launched an Imagination Library program through Best Beginnings, that's one more community that has said we value our young children and want them to have a good start, grow up in Alaska, and stay and work in Alaska.

So I ask you as a parent and a lifelong Alaskan - be different and stand strong. Invest in our economy. Invest in early childhood.

Sincerely,  
Melinda Myers

**From:** [panu lucier](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Public Testimony  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 11:05:42 AM

---

*Thank you to the Chair and Committee members for the opportunity to testify. My name is Panu Lucier and I am writing today as a supporter of young children.*

*I support restoring funding to Alaska's early care and learning systems and programs. For Alaska's children today and for the state of our economy tomorrow, it is critical that we invest in priorities like:*

***Best Beginnings** and their work to increase community engagement around quality early learning and early literacy through programs like Imagination Library.*

***Parents As Teachers** to provide services to families with young children with critical home visiting services.*

***PreK**, an investment in our state in quality early learning to ensure our youngest Alaskan's get a healthy start in their education and enter Kindergarten ready for success.*

*Research has demonstrated that investing early on in a child's life helps better prepare children for school, for work and for life. Thank you for your leadership in supporting quality early learning for Alaska families and children.*

*Panu C.Lucier*

*5441 Rabbit Creek Rd.*

*Anchorage, AK 99516*

**From:** [Shannon Seifert](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Parents as Teachers, Best Beginnings, and other Pre-K Programs are Essential  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 10:45:42 AM

---

Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am a Juneau parent writing to request that you **reinstate full funding for Pre-K programs, including Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings. These programs are essential to the well being of Alaskan parents as well as babies and toddlers.**

**PAT facilitators are a lifeline to support and resources most parents would otherwise not know about or access on their own.** With our first child, I had a very difficult time finding childcare my income could afford. When my baby was 10 months old, I chose to leave my job and become a stay-at-home-mom, which was a very isolating experience. I credit the Parents as Teachers program with helping me through a difficult period of adjustment as well as helping me keep up with my child's milestones. The PAT facilitator helped me find assistance elsewhere when his needs exceeded what the program offered.

With our second child, we are again participating in PAT and regularly attend family nights at the library, evening Turf for Tots events, and PAT family events, all of which bring our family together and give us an opportunity to visit with other families and other children in our community. Both children are benefitting from the Best Beginnings "Dolly Parton's Imagination Library," where age-appropriate books arrive in the mail each month. Our now 3-year-old's enthusiasm for reading is due in part to this program. An exceptional aspect of the Imagination Library is that we have books and stories in common with children in the same age group - a great icebreaker at the playground or at library storytime.

As I begin planning to return to work, I am sincerely hoping AEYC, PAT, and Best Beginnings will be there for us when we search for childcare, follow our new baby's development, foster love of reading, and share the challenges and joys of raising littles with other Juneau families at local AEYC events.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding these essential programs and the benefits they've provided our family and other Alaskan families.

Sincerely,  
Shannon Seifert  
6742 Sherri St.  
Juneau, AK 99801



**From:** [Shayna Rohwer](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Early Learning Funding Cuts  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 8:39:06 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee--

While I'm sure that your job isn't easy, and that you're hearing different things from many people, I'm writing to encourage you to continue funding Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and other early childhood education programs. The research on the impacts of early interventions and education programs all show that there is no better investment than early learning for children and their communities. I've seen this first hand working with families in Juneau as both a doula and case manager for families in Juneau since 2007.

I'll speak directly about the Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program--because I've been involved with it both as a participant and as a referring provider. The PAT program fills a critical gap in our community--it provides a non-threatening intervention to families with social risk factors--and gives families an outlet to brainstorm ways to deal with difficult parenting situations as well as resources to help them encourage their children to learn and thrive. I often speak to families I work with about the immense amount of time most families spend preparing to give birth (an event which takes 1-2 days at most) whereas in the US, we spend very little time and energy preparing for the very challenging and long-term job of parenting. The PAT program provides guidance and practical parenting skills to the parents who may have had very little education and guidance about child development and nurturing their child's curiosity and interest in learning.

I strongly encourage you to continue to fund these critical early learning programs.

Thank you for your attention.  
Best,

Shayna Rohwer, PhD, CD(DONA)  
1025 D Street Juneau, AK 99801  
[shaynarohwer@gmail.com](mailto:shaynarohwer@gmail.com)  
(907)209-7722

**From:** Steve Sue Wing  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Thank you and partnership  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 10:07:03 PM

---

Thank you to Co-Chairs Neuman and Thompson for scheduling an evening of public testimony in the House Finance Committee on the State Operating Budget. Thank you to members of the committee for staying late into the evening to hear the voices, needs, and priorities of your constituents.

Tonight I testified for state funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and restoring the one-time funding for K-12 education that was promised with the passage of legislation last session.

My father was an immigrant to this country and he instilled in me the value of this country and the responsibilities that citizens have to make this democracy work. This is one of my core values as a person and a resident of the state of Alaska for over 15 years. What I failed to mention in my testimony is that my family makes small monetary donations to both early learning programs and also to as many school causes as we can. Not only do we prioritize donations to these programs in our family finances but we also volunteer to participate in these programs, in school classrooms, and participate in many advocacy and volunteer opportunities throughout the state. We understand that many families in Alaska do not have this capacity but we know that state funds must be leveraged to their full potential and we must contribute when we can. Many Alaskans make these contributions too. Investments in young Alaskans without a vote to cast, a voice to advocate for themselves or an email address to submit their comments must be prioritized in the tough decisions that need to be made. Please prioritize the funding of these investments that will lead to returns beyond measure.

Thank you for your service to the State of Alaska and all of the souls that call it home.

Respectfully,

Stephen SueWing  
423 East St.  
Juneau, Alaska  
907-209-7652

**From:** Tom Conley  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Testimony on HB72 before House Finance in Sitka by teleconference 3/5/15  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 8:53:35 PM

---

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on Education funding. My name is Tom Conley and I am a member of the Sitka School Board. I am also a retired Board Certified Pediatrician with 42 years in practice, 30 of those years in Southeast Alaska. Like others who have or will testify here, I am distressed by the movement to cancel the \$32.4 million one time funds and the \$13 million in specific programmatic cuts proposed by the Finance Subcommittee of House Finance. In particular I am disturbed by the retrogressive move on early childhood learning with the bulk of the pre-Kindergarten programs defunded and most eliminated. I think most of us have always instinctively known that children who receive lots of attention, are read to and included in play and conversation develop and mature more rapidly, speak earlier, and in general seem brighter than their peers who lack this stimulation. Certainly personal observation over many years bore that out. More recently a multitude of studies --medical, sociologic, and educational-- have borne out the validity of the argument that early exposure to learning is amazingly beneficial to children. Indeed this can be accomplished in the home if parents or other caretakers are consistently available and particularly if they are given some training and support. However in 21st century America, the economic realities are such that many, probably most, families need two incomes to survive so both parents, if indeed there are two parents, need to work, limiting the time spent with children. This limitation of support is further aggravated when poverty, single parenthood, parental illness, addiction and incarceration are added to the mix.

Where well structured early education is provided for pre-Kindergarten children the educational and by derivation the economic dividends are quite amazing.- special education costs are reduced, truancy and dropout numbers fall, teenage incarceration goes down and teen pregnancy decreases. Nobel Prize in Economics recipient Dr. James Heckman states: "Investing in early childhood education ... shows a 7% to 10% per year return on investment...for these and many reasons. Thus looking at the idea of cutting just over \$3.5 million dollars from early childhood education programs -- completely eliminating three of the four programs impacted (Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and Pre-Kindergarten grants). would not seem to make economic much less educational sense in the long run. I would urge you to reexamine the decision to cut these programs. Tom Conley

**From:** [Shana Kim](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Funding for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and the Alaska PreK Program  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 2:34:49 PM

---

Dear House Finance Committee,

I am an early childhood education advocate, and I am writing to ask that the members of the Committee reconsider eliminating the funding for early education programs. We cannot continue to postpone properly investing in Alaska's children. There have been many studies conducted that demonstrate the long-term positive gains attained by children who participate in early education programs such as reduced crime rates and increased high school graduation rates.

As members of the vulnerable population, children do not get to vote or collectively voice their needs. It is grossly unjust that funding for their future is at risk. If we do not invest in their social and educational opportunities now, we are robbing them of the chance to build a foundation for future success.

There will never be a perfect opportunity to spend money on early childhood development, but why has this particular sector been underfunded and largely ignored by the state government regardless of the economic climate? If your main concern is purely financial, then please consider how prevention in medicine can save more lives and save money in contrast to waiting until a preventable chronic disease develops and then treat the problem. If we do not invest in children now, then what will be the financial cost of addressing equity, social, and workforce development issues later? For many families that will be adversely affected by these funding cuts, this is more than a budget issue. You all have the ability to improve or set back the lives of many young children and their families, and the consequences of such actions will be realized for everyone to witness. I urgently request that the members of the House Finance Committee to reconsider the early education funding cuts. Thank you for the consideration.

Sincerely,  
Shana Kim

**From:** [Richard Erickson](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** budget hearings  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 10:30:05 AM

---

To The Chair and Committee

With low oil revenues, the legislature is looking at ways to cut budget expenses, which is always good. But over-reacting following a crisis event has historically caused considerable problems (ie 911 and patriot act, bank bailouts). Budget cuts that result in slowing Alaska's economy are particularly undesirable.

I believe drastic trimming of expenses can be mitigated by increasing State revenues. By drastic, I mean disproportionate cuts such as proposed for public broadcasting, elimination of broadband support for rural communities via the OWL program, early childhood education, and non-funding of municipal revenue sharing, heating assistance, and energy credits.

All Alaskans are benefiting from low oil prices through reductions in the cost of petroleum products. Gasoline and heating fuels are more than \$1 cheaper than a year ago. If the State imposed a \$1 additional tax on fuel, consumers would be back where we were a year ago in their fuel costs. This would not appear to be a great hardship.

In 2008\*, the total taxable gallons of fuel used was approximately 600,000,000 gallons. A \$1 tax would bring in over 1/2 billion dollars. In addition, an additional 300,000,000 gallons of heating/electrical fuel is not taxed at present and over 1 billion gallons of international flight jet fuel is not taxed.

I would rather pay a little more for fuel than see my neighbors lose their jobs.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express ourselves.

Richard Erickson  
Whale Pass

\*L&R Committee – 2009 Final Report  
Appendix B – Alaska Fuel Metering Project  
Alaska Fuel Metering Project - National Institute of ...  
[www.nist.gov/.../07-lr-ap...](http://www.nist.gov/.../07-lr-ap...)  
National Institute of Standards and Technology

**From:** [Barbara Karl](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Operating budget comments  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 11:17:56 AM

---

I support Medicaid expansion as it is important in providing health care to many more Alaskans and will save us money overall. Early childhood education is extremely important and needs to be funded as it also saves us money in the long run, as does adequate funding for K - 12 education. Also returning the \$20 million to the general fund that previously was allocated for the U-Med Northern Access road is wise and necessary since the road is not necessary and as designed can't be built for that amount.

I recognize that we have a serious fiscal crisis and that wise budgeting is necessary but cuts should not unfairly impact the most needy among us. Although it is only a partial solution, I support re-instituting a state income tax immediately, similar to what we used to have. Not only will it bring in funds but it will make Alaskans more involved in their government since they would be partially paying for it.

Barbara Karl  
2400 East 16th Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99508

**From:** [g. fourmier](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Early Childhood Education and support services are ESSENTIAL!  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 9:53:48 PM

---

I am a 37 year Alaskan resident, mother of 3 adult children born in Alaska, and provider of earlychildhood and mental health services in Alaska for 37 years. Supports for education and wellbeing of young children and their families are essential for eventual positive outcomes in their lives and our communities. As the ACES research demonstrates, lack of adequate care and education and other challenges in the earliest years negatively impact individuals throughout their lives. Please make funding for early education and support a priority!

Kathleen Rhea  
3200 Fritz Cove Road  
Juneau, AK 99801

**From:** Sarah Miller  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Proposed Cuts to Dept. of Ed and Early Development  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 5:29:48 PM

---

My name is Sarah Miller, I am a resident of Nome, Alaska, a teacher by background and a parent as well. I have a child enrolled in Nome Preschool, and the grant that funds the preschool teacher's position is among the proposed legislative budget cuts. I hope to persuade legislators to think twice before cutting funding to a critical service for young children in Nome, one which benefits the entire community in the long run.

Research has shown that teacher turnover rates in preschools typically hovers around 25%, a number higher than nearly every other industry. <http://www.compensationforce.com/2014/02/2013-turnover-rates-by-industry.html>

One of the primary reasons for the high turnover rate in early childhood education is cited as inadequate compensation- salary levels for preschool teachers averaged at around \$30,000 annually, as compared to Kindergarten and Elementary school teachers, at \$52,000-\$55,000. <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/advocacy/ECWorkforceFacts>

The need for having consistency and routine, and the reliable presence of important people in a child's life is invaluable, and is documented by research.  
<http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ReportFINAL.pdf> Some key findings from this study were:

1. Children thrive on relationships. "Responsive, sensitive, and secure adult-child attachments are developmentally expected and biologically essential. Their absence signals a serious threat to child well-being, particularly during the earliest years, and this absence activates the body's stress response systems."
2. "The consequences of a poorly calibrated stress response system early in life include highly unregulated emotions and behavior, compromised memory, attention, and immune/metabolic systems, and blunted responses to feedback- all essential capacities for early learning."
3. "When combined with other sources of adversity and trauma, such as economic hardship and insecurity, excessive instability in household arrangements, or food insecurity, the negative consequences of unresponsive relationships mount exponentially."
4. "Children form developmentally essential relationships not only with their parents but simultaneously with other regular caregivers, including early childhood teachers. These relationships can buffer children from stress."



Our early childhood centers need to be able to provide consistency for children, especially when this is not available in the home environments of many.

The Nome Preschool Grant has solved this problem for our community- it enables the preschool to place a certified teacher in the position of early childhood educator. The certified teacher has appropriate and adequate training in working with the unique needs of young children, is considered a member of the district's professional community and undergoes ongoing professional development & training, is held to the same level of accountability as all highly qualified teachers are, and is able to earn a livable wage while working with our community's children. Placing a trained professional in the preschool position has ensured a higher probability of employment retention, which will lead to more stability for children, parents and preschool staff, long-term planning for programming, and a higher quality preschool program in the long run. This is a long-term investment in the community that benefits all. When the children of our community have high quality, stable, and consistent early childhood experiences, they are set up to perform better in school later on, ultimately graduating and providing a strong workforce for our community, something we desperately need for our economic stability.

The State of Alaska has done not only the right thing by providing funding for this grant, but has done the necessary and wise thing, which will benefit the entire community of Nome in the long run. Why move backward?

We strongly urge the legislation to reconsider the cuts to Early Childhood and to Nome Preschool in particular. Surely there are other areas in which the budget can be trimmed that won't harm the economic and educational health of Alaska's rural communities.



Sarah D. Miller  
PO Box 1209  
Nome AK 99762  
907-433-9501

**From:** [Terry Snyder](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Budget testimony  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 10:03:39 PM

---

I respectfully submit the following testimony for the consideration of members of House Finance in their budget deliberations.

House Finance Committee;

The past few years have been incredibly difficult for our public schools. Every mechanism of schools in our state have been under scrutiny and none more than amount of state funding they receive. The base student formula set in place that has been the guide of what schools utilize as their baseline revenue from the state has been on a roller coaster ride taking school districts with it. Imagine trying to set your own kitchen table budget not knowing from year to year what your financial expectations are with a family to house and feed.

The state's failure to meet the needs of every child means students are in schools that have cut programs, teachers and student services that are suppose to prepare every child for college, careers, life and only damages the economics of the whole state. Underfunding is bordering on leaving a generation of students in schools without access to the sound basic education which is their constitutional right.

The money added to last year's budget and promised for this year made a difference, but it was not adequate and failed to even keep up with inflation. That minimal increase is now on the chopping block. To abandon that promise to our schools and stop fulfilling the constitutional mandate to provide "sound basic education" to our children is a travesty and could lead to expensive state litigation once more. To not recognize the data that tells us that every dollar invested in early childhood development provides 7 to 10 percent per annum return on investment is reckless and a failure of stewardship of state funds.

Please prioritize and fund our schools first. Consider the savings that will be realized by adopting a more adequate, predictable, stable, and sustainable funding mechanism that will in the long run be good for our state's children. Perhaps reinstating a minimal school tax to supplement funds will assist in meeting that goal. I look to you our elected officials to continue to work on new more creative pathways to meet our state constitutional obligation to fund schools. But please don't start that discussion that in the long run could benefit future students by sacrificing the education of students now enrolled in our public schools.

We are a state of great resources. The most important one is our children. Let's not forget that.

Thank you for your service and consideration of my views,

Terry Snyder  
Palmer, Alaska

**From:** Amy Hayes  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Keep state funding for preK!!  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 1:49:50 PM

---

As a preschool teacher and a concerned community member I am writing to express my belief in the importance of preschool for the children in Alaska. Without this much needed learning and practice with early life skills — social and emotional skills — these children are at a serious disadvantage when they enter kindergarten, and as they progress through their elementary school years.

Please reconsider this cut in funding for the state funded preschool program.

Thank you,

Amy Hayes

**From:** [Ellen Naughter Andrews](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Do NOT cut early learning funding!  
**Date:** Friday, March 06, 2015 9:13:22 AM

---

Good morning members of the House Finance Committee,

Please do not cut early learning funding!

I am writing to you as a mother of three children, a former program manager at AWARE, and the current facilitator of both the Healthy Relationships Class for Women and the Beyond Baby Blues support group (the only local support for pregnant and postpartum mothers experiencing depression and/or anxiety). As a social services provider and community member in Juneau, it is clear to me that there are many gaps for parents of young children. The programs that deserve this funding - Imagination Library, Parents as Teachers, Pre-K Programs, and Partnerships for Families & Children - close this gap, dramatically. Each one of these programs are invaluable on their own and together, provide meaningful support, education for the parents and children participating.

The proposed cuts will undoubtedly cost the state of Alaska in the future. If you haven't read the research, please do. Supporting parents and their children from birth to age 5 is tremendously important and will provide lasting returns. Establishing strong, healthy parents who are aware of developmental milestones, nutrition, and early education build accountable and intelligent adults. What can be lacking in any one family can be supported and compensated for with meaningful community programming designed specifically to fill essential gaps. Alaska has many lacking families - isolated, uneducated, traumatized, poverty stricken - these programs target both underserved and in need, as well as high functioning families. The end result is multi-dimensional. In addition to the rich programming, families of all socioeconomic backgrounds share parenting issues, celebrate the development of their children and rely on their role as parent as the bridge to new relationships.

Do not cut this funding. This would have a catastrophic effect on the community of Juneau.

Sincerely,  
Ellen and Alex Andrews

**From:** [Joe Banta](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** HB 72 Written Testimony  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 9:04:53 PM

---

The testimony that follows is directed to Members of the Alaska State House Finance Committee:

We are parents of three young men - aged 16, 20 and 23 - who are 4th generation Alaskans. Our youngest is a student in the Anchorage School District; the oldest is now in the workforce after graduating in May from a prestigious college; and our middle son is a sophomore, also attending one of the top colleges in America. I would like you to consider my perspective, shared by so many other Alaskan families, as you deliberate expenditures for education in our state.

We have strong roots in this state and in our community. It has served our family well. Our older boys received excellent educations, which launched them into adulthood well-prepared to give back their career choices, and our youngest (to this point) is looking forward to following his brothers' footsteps by, hopefully, entering a topnotch college.

Here is the gist of our concern: The budget now on the table for Alaska's education - pre-K through post-graduate programs - is sending the message that Alaska is closed to business. The crisis resulting from the decline in oil is real, should be considered with care, but is not a death sentence for our state. What will result in a death sentence for Alaska is giving up on the future because of this first shot across the state budget's bow. My oldest son want to go to medical school, is applying to WWAMI (because he loves Alaska and is committed to the future of our state), and hopes to be a medical researcher some day. Your budget projects zeroing out WWAMI's budget in the near future. How tragically short-sighted!

Our youngest has already experienced multiple years in a row of steadily decreasing educational opportunities in the Anchorage School District - beloved teachers laid off and leaving our community, expanded choices (such as gifted mentorships) that benefitted his brothers now gone, and only the slim promise of two consecutive years with a predictable BSA giving us hope that he'll finish out his public schooling without further losses. Now, your budget takes away the hope of that predictable BSA. Again - this would be a tragically short-sighted decision for all of our school-aged students - the essence hope for the future of Alaska.

Finally, all three of these 4th generation Alaskans love Alaska, and it is our hope as their parents that they will live their lives and raise their families here. But, these are smart boys, who will want only the best for their children - our grandchildren. This requires absolute prioritization of all levels of education, but most importantly, pre-K programs for all Alaskans. This relatively small education for your youngest and most vulnerable citizens, pays off far into the future as we can count on a skilled, prepared workforce. Pre-K education is the best way to ensure that every other dollar we pay on education K-12 and beyond is getting the best out of our investment. Zeroing out pre-K education fund in HB 72 would be a tragically short-sighted decision for our state.

In sum...cut money from capitol projects, but leave education funding alone. Doing so will be a message to all of Alaska, the U.S. and the world, that Alaska is, and will always be, open for

business and will always take care of our future, our youth, who will be the business men and women of tomorrow. Sincerely, Janice and Joe Banta

**From:** Johnson, Jeremy J (DOA)  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Budget Discussion  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 5:06:26 PM

---

Greetings.

My name is Jeremy Johnson, and I am a single co-parent of a pre-school aged son. This year I've made it a point to be involved with the school system, the reasons of my son attending Riverbend Pre-school, and wanting to support the community in every way possible. I'm not from Alaska, but my son is. I take pride in saying that my son is from here. It is an honor to be a part of such a great community of people.

It is incredibly important to me that promises made by leadership, in this case in the form of a budget appropriation for education, be kept if they were moral and well-intended in the appropriation. Making budget decisions is always a tough process. We know that everyone is really trying to do what's right for the population, and we really appreciate that effort. Some cuts are necessary, but prioritizing education is paramount, if not the pinnacle of being responsible long-term. The state has a specific need for IT professionals, Doctors, nurses, as well as the fine men and women of the trades. Every statistic I've seen, related to the success of learners and educators, are directly impacted by the k-12 educational experience.

For me, that was having functioning computers in the computer lab, teachers that cared enough to host after school programs for advanced learners, while missing out on time with their own families, and having well-educated teachers that took the time to really teach to the student. That meant much more to me when I got out of k-12 and moved into the workforce. But not everyone has had the same exposure in public schools, as I've had. Not every child had the opportunity to be in a pre-K program, like my son. Education is without a doubt, the most meaningful investment in the modern age.

If I'd not been exposed to these kinds of programs, through my public school education, then I wouldn't have become a Computer Science lab instructor by the age of 19. I wouldn't have been a Fortune 500 Network Engineer by the age of 22. I wouldn't have had the motivation to volunteer with local public schools and the local Economic Development Council initiatives. If it weren't for my mom placing my education above her own tireless efforts, holding sometimes 3 jobs, I wouldn't be the man I am today. I thank her for her sacrifices, and every chance I get to thank a teacher or administrator, I take it.

I strongly urge you, the policy and decision makers, to also place education in your top tier. Having an uneducated and unmotivated youth, results in an uneducated and unmotivated work force. Having such a workforce, results in outsourcing of mission critical priorities across sectors, which often leads to those funds finding their way out of the fine State of Alaska, or even the country as a whole.

Thank you for your time.

-iii

Jeremy Johnson  
Analyst/Programmer III  
State of Alaska  
Department of Administration  
Division of Retirement & Benefits  
Information Technology Services  
Phone: +1 (907) 465 - 4528  
[jeremy.johnson2@alaska.gov](mailto:jeremy.johnson2@alaska.gov)



**From:** [Florita Chung](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Date:** Thursday, March 05, 2015 12:32:30 PM

---

I'm emailing a testimonial letter concerning the state funding for Parents as teachers program. I am a grandparent for my two grandchildren who receive help from this program and would like to say that this program has been ever so helpful for them. We enjoy the home visits , the outings to the science center the weekly or biweekly meetings with other families , the imagination library as well as the books we receive in the mail. Please continue to fund this program because it has benefitted myself as well as my grandchildren.

Sincerely , Florita Chung , Nevaeh and Adrianna

Saelee

# ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Anchorage.lio@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME: Lisa Danielson

REPRESENTING: Parents as Teachers

BILL#/ SUBJECT: HB 72  
COMMITTEE &

HEARING DATE: 3/5/15

I cannot stress enough the importance of investing in Early Childhood and particularly in the Home Visit model "Parents as Teachers"

As a young mother 30 years ago I had the opportunity to participate in a home visit model that was offered in my community. From this opportunity I learned many new approaches to raising my two young sons. I learned more about how to parent and about their growth + developmental stages. I also learned about how their brain develops as I worked with them and provided activities that helped them learn. This was such an inspiration to me that I pursued my education in early childhood and have worked and supported families in this field for the past 25 + years.

I have also seen the benefits to the many families that I have had the honor of supporting. Families have been linked to valuable resources that have helped both their family growth as well as their children's growth.

Services that include safe housing, enrollment diagnosis for Infant Learning programs, WIC English as a second language families and

many other program that support our families.

Please consider investing in early childhood  
and the future of our children

# ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Anchorage.lio@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME: Eileen Floyd

REPRESENTING: Best Beginnings

BILL#/ SUBJECT: Operating + Mental Health Budget.  
COMMITTEE &

HEARING DATE: 3/5/15

I am asking you to restore the funding to Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and Pre-K programs as we all know tomorrows success begins today. There couldn't be a truer statement when it comes to early learning. The science is clear. The first 5 years are critical.

These programs are making a difference in our state. Invest wisely, put our money where it works, invest in early learning.

# ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Anchorage.lio@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME:

Faamafu F Kimoto

REPRESENTING:

PAT (Parents As Teachers)

BILL#/ SUBJECT:

COMMITTEE &

HEARING DATE:

03/05/2015

Here I am a parent of a 2yrs old in this program. Parents as Teachers is a very important program to my son MJ. He is only 2yrs but he knows his letters, numbers, colours and some shapes. He can read a book by flipping the pages and say it out with his own words. He has interest in school in a young age and it helps him to ready for Kindergarten.

So please it's not too late restore the card on Parents As Teachers. I am supporting this program 100% because of its benefits to our children.

Thank You and Have a Bless Day.

Email:- faamafukimoto10@gmail.com

Address:- 5417 E 4th Ave  
Anchorage AK 99508.

# ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Anchorage.lio@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME: Jane Forrest

REPRESENTING: Parents as Teachers

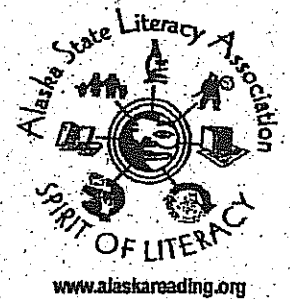
BILL#/ SUBJECT: HB 72  
COMMITTEE &

HEARING DATE: 3-5-15

The best time to start building solid language skills is in the first 3 years of life. This is science supported. Parents as Teachers strongly supports early literacy and teaches parents how they can enhance their child's vocabulary. With greater vocabulary a child is better able to express thoughts and emotions and more able to handle adversity. Children with larger vocabularies perform better in school — again this is supported by science. Better performance in school enhances self esteem and the desire to achieve more. Parents as Teachers makes positive change in families for a small price. As we invest in our children, we invest in our country's future.

## **Literacy Development of Alaskan Children Ages Three to Five**

### **A Position Statement of the Alaska State Literacy Association**



#### **The Importance of Preschool and Kindergarten**

The Alaska State Literacy Association believes that every child in Alaska should attend kindergarten and that 3 and 4 year olds should have access to free, high quality public preschool. The high-quality preschool and kindergarten experiences that successfully foster early language and literacy skills lay a critical foundation for children's successful future. Children who attend high-quality preschools and kindergarten are less likely to be retained in the primary grades, have higher graduation rates from high school, and have fewer behavior problems (Barnett, 1995; Campbell & Raney, 1995; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman, & Levine, 2002; Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997).

#### **The Need For Free, High-Quality, Public Kindergarten and Preschools**

At present, the state of Alaska funds but does not mandate kindergarten. AS 14.03.070 mandates compulsory attendance from age 7 to 16 years. School age is further defined as ages 6 to 18 with 5 year olds allowed to attend kindergarten where it is available. The federal No Child Left Behind law stipulates that all children should be reading at grade level by the end of third grade. If Alaska's children are not required to attend school until the age of seven, many will not be reading at third grade level by age eight or nine. Young children will meet this requirement easier when they are provided the rich kindergarten experiences where they learn that text carries meaning, readers process print from left to right, top to bottom, and that real life involves using reading and writing for practical purposes.

Alaska is one of a few states not fully or partially funding public preschools. Preschool is only available to a limited number of children based on the ability to pay. Yet children learn through assimilation of concrete "hands on" type of activities in the early years. They need rich experiences in preschool and kindergarten where children can engage and construct their theories about print (e.g., what are words – how do they work). Experience that builds background knowledge is essential to becoming a knowledgeable reader. High-quality preschools and kindergarten provide appropriate early literacy experiences delivered by well-prepared, knowledgeable, caring teachers. Teachers who enhance the early literacy of children from diverse cultural and language groups use culturally appropriate instruction that is congruent with the children's home and community language and literacies. (Heath, 1983; Hohepa & McNaughton, 2002; McNaughton, 2001).

Alaskan children's development can be positively affected by high-quality preschool and kindergarten experiences that improve later academic and social competence (Barnett, 1995; Morrow, 2004; Neuman & Dickinson, 2001). It is the position of the Alaska State Literacy Association that every child in Alaska should have access to free, high-quality, public preschools and mandated kindergarten.

## **Alaska State Literacy Association**

### **Nature and Purpose**

The Alaska State Literacy Association (ASLA) is one of the largest professional education associations in Alaska with over 400 members. ASLA is affiliated with the International Literacy Association (ILA) formerly known as the International Reading Association (IRA).

Members rely on ASLA for the professional development resources they need to reach our shared goal: Teaching Alaskans to read. ASLA supports literacy for all, lifetime learning and informed decision making. The state association in partnership with ILA and local councils recognizes and supports quality literacy programs and opportunities through awards, grants, council programs, workshops and annual conferences. ASLA provides educators, at all levels, access to research, materials and methodologies to promote and teach lifetime literacy and learning. ASLA provides a network for communication, exchange of information, leadership, professional development and involvement of Alaska's diverse community of educators.

Alaska State Literacy Association advocacy contact information:

Patricia George  
3328 Fritz Cove Road  
Juneau, AK 99801  
[prgeorge@gci.net](mailto:prgeorge@gci.net)  
(907) 789-0172  
(907) 789-6964 fax



**From:** [Vivian H.](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Alaska's Early Learning Programs  
**Date:** Sunday, March 08, 2015 3:55:54 PM

---

I believe the legislature should support important Alaska's early learning programs for young children: Parents As Partners, Best Beginnings (Imagination Library and Partnerships for Families and Children), and the Pre-K Programs. There is overwhelming research to show that this is one of the most important investments we can make to ensure Alaska's future economic and social wellbeing. It should be a priority even in the current tight budget situation. --Vivian Hegg, Juneau, Alaska.

Sent from Windows Mail

**From:** [Kerstin Schmitt](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** best beginnings  
**Date:** Sunday, March 08, 2015 9:03:59 PM

---

Good evening,

I have learned that the State of Alaska is trying to cut some spendings and a few cuts have to do with early education.

We moved to Alaska a few months back and have a son who is almost a year old. He loves books and I was very excited signing him up for the imagination library when I found out about it.

I am one of the fortunate mothers who can stay home with my child and go to the library and get books, take advantage of story time etc.

However, I know many mothers who can not take advantage of those programs because they have to work, and imagination library is a great way for them to be able to get books to their homes and get their child/children to read.

There are statistics that a high percentage of inmates in prison can not read and that an adult who does not read well might wind up unemployed because he or she will always have difficulties finding or keeping a job.

It is my strong believe that there is a connection of reading to a young child and the outcome of his or her later life.

In my opinion it is very important to keep programs which help with reading, early education, school education, homework help etc., since cutting those programs might help save some money now, but in the future there will be other expenses which would not be necessary.

Thank you for your time reading this.

I hope you make a decision which is considering the long term effects as well.

K. Schmitt

**From:** [Sara Jeffress](#)  
**To:** [House Finance](#)  
**Subject:** Please Fund Early Childhood & Libraries  
**Date:** Friday, March 06, 2015 2:44:22 PM

---

Good Afternoon,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the proposed budget cuts impacting early childhood initiatives, including Best Beginnings, and Alaska State Library programs like Online With Libraries and Live Homework Help. As a parent, a librarian, and a community member in the Mat-Su Valley I feel strongly that the loss of these funds will be detrimental to the future success of our youngest, most vulnerable citizens.

I respect the fact that every effort has been made to keep classroom funding at 100%. But by cutting early childhood development, rural broadband access (Online With Libraries), and Live Homework Help you cut the knees right out from under those classrooms. Each one of these programs lends valuable, quantifiable assistance to classroom teachers, increasing graduation rates and future productivity.

In the broad scheme of our state budget these are small expenditures that lead to big rewards. Please keep funding for Best Beginnings, Online With Libraries, and Live Homework Help at 100%.

Sincerely,  
Sara Saxton  
907.830.3486

**From:** Kelly Arnold  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Proposed budget cuts for early childhood programs  
**Date:** Friday, March 06, 2015 11:43:51 PM

---

March 6, 2015

To Whom it May Concern,


I am very concerned about proposed budget cuts to the early childhood programs in our community including Widening the Net Preschool, Best Beginnings, and Imagination Library. These early childhood education programs are much needed by the families and children in our community. It has been proven that the first five years in a young child's life are the most important for growth and development. These early childhood programs help children develop in all developmental domains including cognitive, social/emotional, gross and fine motor skills and language. My son attends the Widening the Net Preschool at Goose Bay Elementary in Wasilla, Alaska and he has grown so much! This is his second year attending preschool and he is already achieving higher marks for his age in just literacy alone!

I am not only a mother but I am also a full time student majoring in Early Childhood Education. I have learned that during the first five years of a child's life their brains grow and develop at an amazing pace! Preschool classrooms are full of stimulation in all areas of development to help children's brains grow! The amazing preschool teachers we have care about the children they teach and plan beautifully prepared preschool environments that contain materials in all subject areas including art, math and science, literature, music and many other materials for the children to manipulate, build with and explore with. As a community we should support our children's growth at the time that they need it the most. These children are part of community and party of our future. We need to give them the best start possible! Taking away the funding for these programs would be detrimental to the development of young children in our community. Please reconsider cutting the funding for these very important and much needed programs.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,  
Kelly Utkin

P.O. Box 874404  
Wasilla, AK 99687  
Phone: 907-414-7548

*"My friends are my estate." Emily Dickinson* 

**From:** Amy K. Marshall  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Public Testimony Followup for AlaskaOWL, Live Homework Help, Early Literacy, and SchoolBAG Grant  
**Date:** Friday, March 06, 2015 4:14:01 PM

---

To:

The Honorable Mark Neuman  
The Honorable Steve Thompson  
The Honorable Dan Saddler  
The Honorable Bryce Edgmon  
The Honorable Lynn Gattis  
The Honorable Cathy Munoz  
The Honorable Lance Pruitt  
The Honorable Tammie Wilson  
The Honorable Les Gara  
The Honorable David Guttenberg  
The Honorable Scott Kawasaki  
The Honorable Mike Hawker

From: Amy K. Marshall, Director, Craig Public Library

Date: 6 March 2015

Re: HB 72 Proposed Cuts to the AlaskaOWL Program, Live Homework Help, Early Literacy and the School Broadband Access Grant (SchoolBAG)

Dear Representatives,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you last Wednesday about rural librarians' concerns in regard to the proposed loss of programs vital to our patrons and the public. I realize the budget situation for the State of Alaska in FY16 is nothing short of dire. I do not envy any of you in the positions you are in as you seek to find solutions that will allow the State to remain fiscally solvent, but not injure those institutions that seek to provide education, economic development, and quality of life services to the public. Because the AlaskaOWL is such an emotional topic for librarians across the state, I would like to take a moment to set it down to brass tacks. Last year, for example, the Craig Public Library received a subsidy of just over \$9,000 to bridge the gap between our 90% e-Rate subsidy (the highest subsidy allowed by e-Rate, which speaks to the poverty in our area), the cost to the City of Craig, and the real cost of managed broadband (a 1.5Mbps connection). Last year, the real, quantified benefit to the citizens of Craig and greater Prince of Wales Island who use the broadband and videoconferencing for classes and trainings was \$114,766. If you extrapolated these numbers out across 100 libraries, the ROI for the \$791K the state invests in the AlaskaOWL Project far outweighs the State's investment. Because the Craig Public Library's broadband was upgraded to a whole 3Mbps in October of 2014, the subsidy from the State will be \$13,000 in FY16. Needless to say, broadband in remote areas to libraries is expensive, but the cost of not subsidizing connectivity is far higher. Should the OWL be cut, the Craig Public Library will not be able to afford viable broadband. The library will not be able to provide WiFi, and we will revert back to where we were in 2010, when I was unplugging the internet because of a fear of going over our data limit. Just today, I had a

gentleman who is in a UAS distance learning course come in to have an online test proctored. I mentioned that, if the OWL is cut, there is a very good chance we won't be able to provide that service anymore because our speed won't allow Blackboard to load. There is nothing quite like being on a conference call with peers in the Lower 48 who say things like, "Oh, we'll just do that as a Google Hangout." And I have to say, "My internet won't support that. I only have 3Mbps." They are amazed. And stunned. And very sorry for me. Yet, I know where the library came from. This new connection surpasses anything we've had in the past.

In addition, we will not be able to offer Certified Food Protection Manager courses and proctor the tests. Businesses will have to send employees to Ketchikan, at great expense, for this training. Some may tell you that some libraries use OWL for "frivolous" things like Statewide Bard-a-thons, or dance classes, or programs about the music of inner Asia. In rural areas without access to museums or arts councils or colleges or enrichment opportunities on a local level, these things aren't frivolous, they add immensely to the quality of life of our small communities.

I would also urge to you consider Live Homework Help. In rural areas where tutors are not abundant, this service of the Alaska State Library is an absolute Godsend for students whose parents may lack the ability to assist with homework. I'm not good at Algebra beyond the quadratic formula. As a parent, I can tell you how invaluable this service is. I have two teenagers who are getting ready for college. Live Homework Help has been wonderful. In addition to math help, there is a proofreader who can help with things like resume building and college essay submission. The resume building piece of Live Homework Help is so fantastic that I recommend it to patrons who are looking to polish their resumes. It sounds trite, but I steered a young man to that service three weeks ago when he walked in to the library and said, "I need a job, but I don't know how to make a resume." Last week, he came back, beaming, because the person at the other end of the connection helped him with his resume and he had just landed a full-time, year round job. Those are the stories that come out of libraries. Those are the stories of real Alaskans that you need to consider as you move forward.

In Craig, our Head Start shut down. This happened last month. Because I, as a true believer in all things literacy, am unwilling to sacrifice early literacy training for the four year olds who will be entering Kindergarten in the fall, I have been working to create Early Literacy programs to supplement what families are doing to prepare their children to succeed in school. The loss of Best Beginnings and Ready to Read would be devastating. Right now, there are 84 children aged 0-5 who are part of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library -- the funding for which comes from the state's Early Literacy Programs. In the schools, STRIVE has done so much to help children who have difficulty reading. We need to work to ensure that children receive the best programs possible while in Preschool and Kindergarten. The window is very small in which we can have the greatest impact. We cannot afford to get this wrong.

Finally, there is the SchoolBAG Grant -- \$5M to ensure that rural schools are upgraded to 10Mbps and connected. As the schools are facing online standardized testing, this would seem to be not just a good idea, but essential. I can tell you that on the first day of the "test" of

AMP, internet in some libraries crashed. A phone call to GCI told me that there had been a "catastrophic failure" within the system. Putting two and two together gave me the answer that Alaska's infrastructure is not at a place where 26,000 school children can simultaneously download a test client. Because connectivity is so important to be citizens of the 21st century, I do hope you would consider this when making your budgetary decisions.

Again, I realize that there needs to be a \$3.5B cut in the budget. I just want these cuts to be fiscally responsible. To spend millions of dollars -- grant dollars obtained through the US Department of Commerce -- on infrastructure only to abandoned it is, to me, fiscally irresponsible. I have watched, rather closely, things that have happened in places like Michigan and Ireland and Greece -- places that have implemented austerity budgets. I would urge you to not go down that path. I would urge you to be creative, to think beyond the commodities from which we currently derive funds for the State coffers. I would urge you to not relegate rural citizens of Alaska to second class citizenship in the digital and real world. Libraries Leverage Alaskans' Futures. Please allow us to continue to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I have every hope that you will work hard to do the right things for Alaska and her citizens -- both urban and rural.

Sincerely,

Amy K. Marshall  
Director  
Craig Public Library

**From:** Krista Phillips  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Support Early Childhood Funding  
**Date:** Friday, March 06, 2015 5:33:17 PM

---

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee:

As a citizen, a professional, and a mother of a 6 year old kindergartener who grew in countless ways from early childhood education (preschool), I am offering my support for early childhood funding and for the restoration of funding for Best Beginnings, Parents As Teachers and PreK. Prepared young children are the brightest future Alaska could ever realize.

Sincerely,

**Krista R Phillips**



**From:** Kelly Arnold  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Proposed budget cuts for early childhood programs  
**Date:** Friday, March 06, 2015 11:43:51 PM

---

March 6, 2015

To Whom it May Concern,

I am very concerned about proposed budget cuts to the early childhood programs in our community including Widening the Net Preschool, Best Beginnings, and Imagination Library. These early childhood education programs are much needed by the families and children in our community. It has been proven that the first five years in a young child's life are the most important for growth and development. These early childhood programs help children develop in all developmental domains including cognitive, social/emotional, gross and fine motor skills and language. My son attends the Widening the Net Preschool at Goose Bay Elementary in Wasilla, Alaska and he has grown so much! This is his second year attending preschool and he is already achieving higher marks for his age in just literacy alone!


I am not only a mother but I am also a full time student majoring in Early Childhood Education. I have learned that during the first five years of a child's life their brains grow and develop at an amazing pace! Preschool classrooms are full of stimulation in all areas of development to help children's brains grow! The amazing preschool teachers we have care about the children they teach and plan beautifully prepared preschool environments that contain materials in all subject areas including art, math and science, literature, music and many other materials for the children to manipulate, build with and explore with. As a community we should support our children's growth at the time that they need it the most. These children are part of community and part of our future. We need to give them the best start possible! Taking away the funding for these programs would be detrimental to the development of young children in our community. Please reconsider cutting the funding for these very important and much needed programs.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Kelly Utkin

P.O. Box 874404  
Wasilla, AK 99687  
Phone: 907-414-7548

*"My friends are my estate." Emily Dickinson* 

**From:** Pauline Plumb  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** RECONSIDER: Support Funding for Early Childhood Education  
**Date:** Friday, March 06, 2015 8:11:34 PM

---

Early childhood education and family programs are IMPERATIVE. During this critical time of children's growth & development, these programs are needed more than ever. This isn't about "would be nice" programs - it's about our only hope for Alaska's future: the children! Please reconsider budget recommendations, and FUND early childhood education programs for Alaskans.

Pauline Plumb  
Juneau, Alaska  
March 6, 2015

①

My name is Dixie Hood. I have served as a Lic. Mar. + Fam Therapist both in State of Alaska and City of Juneau agencies and in private practice for 30 years. My ongoing family and personal experience preceded that and continues. All of this leads me to be a strong advocate for pre-K education. I not only oppose any budget cuts in existing programs, but support increased financing to develop universal pre-K education.

I participated in a co-op nursery school program with each of my three children. It was set up under the Community Education Dept. of the College of Marin in Calif. Parents were required to participate one day each week to facilitate all the activities as well as the weekly hour-long evening class in early childhood development. This was conducted by the nursery school director who was a faculty member of the community college. This was a program so beneficial for the children and their families that it influenced my career path.

As a psychology instructor at the Community College and State University level in Calif. and here in Southeast Alaska, Early Childhood and Adolescent Development was part of my curriculum. The formative

(2)

years of a child's life determines the health and well-being for a lifetime.

I subsequently earned a second graduate degree in psychology, in clinical training and licensure as a Marriage and Family Counselor in Calif. and Alaska. This profession bases much of treatment on Family of Origin issues. The home environment, nurturance and sense of security established from birth thru pre-school years the thinking and emotions and, especially, self-value of the child. This contributes to learning and behavior and the potential of success in life and relationships.

The Douglas Montessori Pre-School is an outstanding example of a structured, supportive environment promoting and advancing early childhood education and confidence. For several years I was employed as an on-call Substitute Teacher. There were separate programs for toddlers who were potty-trained and 3 and 4 year olds

who began learning to organize puzzles, recognize letters, of the alphabet and words, beginning reading skills and a variety of activities, inside and out. These included such things as sign language, baking and gardening. Children that graduated and headed to public school Kindergarten became talented and superior students. Best Beginnings, Head Start and AEYC are all resources that have offered positive early childhood learning. Wowed that all our youngsters had such opportunities to start their lives!

The State Administration and Legislature have been focused on Budget Cuts. There has not been sufficient protection of some specific social and economic needs. These include inappropriate cuts to the Alaska Marine Highway System and needed reliable ferry service, especially in Southeast Alaska. The resistance to preparing legislation to establish Medicaid Expansion is foolish, political and is costing Alaskans an unnecessary financial burden.

Leadership is needed to develop additional

(4)

revenue, the State Income Tax should never have been done away with.

If even a token tax had been preserved there wouldn't be such political fear about reinstituting it. Where is the governmental courage? The Journal Empire carried an editorial on Sunday, March 1st proposing that our fuel excise taxes, the lowest in the United States, be doubled to meet current needs. This legislative action could be temporary, or not, until oil revenue increases and our dependence on it doesn't wreck the Quality of life for all Alaskans, now and in the generations to come.

It's time for sensible priorities and leadership. How bad do things have to get?

**Nelson, Sabrina M (DNR)**

---

**From:** Nelson, Sabrina M (DNR)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 8:39 AM  
**To:** 'lhscfin@akleg.gov'  
**Subject:** Please continue funding for the PAT and Best Beginnings programs

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for taking the time to consider the importance of the Parents As Teacher's program (PAT) and programs like Best Beginnings including the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, these programs have made a huge difference in the life of my family. I am a full-time working mother that is also trying to earn a degree through online attendance with the University of Alaska Southeast. I value education and with the limited amount of time I have to juggle all these priorities, these programs have been a phenomenal asset to our everyday lives. I have two boys, Rylan, 3 1/2 years old, and Osias, 1 year old.

We joined the PAT program within the first two months of Rylan's life and continued until he aged out of the program. When I first joined the program I was an uneducated and unconfident mess. What can I say, I was a new parent. I wondered how the hospital could let me walk out their front door entrusting me with a baby. At almost 30, I didn't know the first thing about infants; it had been too long since I last was a babysitter in high school and even then it wasn't watching a newborn. I was fearful, struggling with the reality of responsibility cradled in my arms. It was beyond comprehension what to do next with this little life I brought into this world. To put it bluntly, I needed guidance and support. Emily, my PAT advisor, was there for us. I had questions, a lot of questions. I wanted to know about my child, I wanted to encourage his development, I wanted to know about what support and resources were available to us, guidance on childcare, information about first foods, potty training, what developmental milestones were next, how to communicate with him before his verbal skills developed, what activities were around town; the list was always growing.

I looked forward to the home visits, sharing precious time with a knowledgeable educator that felt like an extension of my family. The visits were structured and informative; educational white papers, the monthly newsletter, developmental screenings, activities (the part producing the most memorable moments), a new book, and discussion about what I wanted to know about next. Through these regular visits I developed confidence in myself to make decisions about my child's future, if I didn't know the answer who to contact to direct me to how to find the answer, how important reading together is and so much more. The relationship developed thru the support of Emily built confidence and trust in myself as a parent and as an educator of my own children. Emily and I shared several moments with each of my children (developmental milestones) that we explored and celebrated.

Through the monthly parties where other families gathered at various locations, bonds with other families were created and are currently sustained. It was a wonderful way to network with other parents that you can relate to because they are experiencing the same things you are. The snacks were delightful and our favorite place was always the pool. Emily gave me the tools to be a good parent and encourage the growth as it was happening. Without the PAT program's involvement I would not have become the knowledgeable, supportive, and actively involved parent that I am today.

When I look back at this program I am grateful that it was such a large part of Rylan's life and I am saddened that Osias wasn't able to take full advantage of such a wonderful program. The opportunity

to influence the future is here; it starts in the home, it starts with solid foundations, it starts with strong relationships, and it starts with knowledge. The PAT program provides parents with education and the chance to make a better future for their children. I hope this program will be around for a long time and many other families will receive the benefits that I was able to receive.

Through the Monthly Newsletter I am regularly informed about events going on around town that I can participate in with my children. There are several events that we take advantage of attending during the course of the month and are considered very important bonding times together. We attend the first Tuesday family library night at the downtown library and receive a book, the first Saturday Workshop at Home Depot, the breastfeeding café on the third Saturday, the family night at the turf on the second and fourth Friday's, and all of the specially sponsored swim's none of which would I have known about without the Monthly newsletter.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is another program that is a part of our daily life. Friday of every week we, as a family, go to the post office to check the mail. This is another special moment in our regular routine. My son is always asking if there is going to be a new book in the mail. Without this program, there will be nothing to look forward to in the mail anymore. This program is deeply intertwined in our evening routine, before bed we spend almost an hour selecting and reading books from our personal library before bedtime. Since personal finances are limited for our family, our home library is composed of almost exclusively books obtained through the PAT program, the first Tuesday family library night, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Please take a moment and put your feet in my shoes. Beyond the monotonous grind of daily life, when are the moments I, as a parent, look forward to? Yes, the time with my children which hopefully, will be continually enriched by the PAT and Best Beginning programs.

Sabrina Nelson  
907-723-0191



My name is Patricia George, from Juneau and I am here representing the Alaska State Literacy Association.

The Alaska State Literacy Association is one of the largest professional education association in Alaska with a membership of over 400 members. ASLA is affiliated with the International Literacy Association formerly known as the International Reading Association (IRA). ASLA supports literacy for all, lifetime learning and informed decision making.

We want to urge you to fund the following early childhood literacy programs: Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and Pre-K Programs. One part of Best Beginnings is the Imagination Library Program. You have the data that Juneau has gathered on the Kindergarten entry testing and the

improvement in those scores for children who have participated in the Imagination Library program.

Juneau started three years before the other Southeast communities, but the other communities are starting to show improvements and need the opportunity to continue early childhood literacy programs.

As a former first grade teacher, I know how

Thank you to the chair and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify. My name is Meghan Johnson, Director of Learn & Grow, Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System for early learning. I support investing in Alaska's early care and learning systems and programs. It is imperative that we restore the proposed cuts to children and young families. This funding ensures we are supporting critical early learning supports from Home visiting to quality PreK and literacy programs – all leading to more positive outcomes for children starting in early childhood. I specifically encourage you to support funding for young children and families by reinstating the:

- \$ for Best Beginnings and their work to increase community engagement around quality early learning and early literacy through programs like Imagination Library
- \$ for Parents As Teachers supporting families with home visiting including health screening, parent education, resources, and child development
- \$ for PreK - providing quality early learning programming for working families and ensuring young children have access to early learning supports and needed interventions prior to entering K.

**All of these efforts** provide critical education and community services for families and early educators and support quality early learning- investments that research strongly demonstrates have long lasting benefits for not only young children, but their families, communities and our state economy. Investing in our youngest children is the best investment our state can make with future guaranteed return on investment – in some cases reported as high as 17%.

In Alaska, there are approximately 80,000 children under the age of 12 in Alaska who have both parents in the work force. Unfortunately, Alaska's current ECL capacity can only meet about 50% of this need. Current economic benefits to investing in Alaska's ECL show each year Alaska invests approximately \$235 million in Early Care & learning, with parents making up 61%, state 8%, federal at 30% and private/ employee sponsored at 1%. As parents and governmental organizations pay for childcare, childcare providers spend this money in state on employee wages and salaries, benefits, food, and a host of other necessary supplies. This virtuous cycle, known as the multiplier effect, leads to a total contribution to Alaska's economy of nearly \$350 million each year and the equivalent of nearly 6,400 full-time jobs. According to the 2011 McDowell Economic Impact Study, parents earned approximately \$1.1 billion in income because they have quality early care for their children so they can go to work.

Cutting these critical early care & learning programs is the exact opposite of national and international economic and scientific research recommendations.

Learn & Grow, managed by thread is part of the early childhood advocacy group comprised of leading early childhood organizations with representation across the state that agree funding for early childhood is critical. We know investing early on in a child's life helps better prepare children for school, for work and for life. Thank you for your time and leadership in supporting young children and their families.

Thank you for you time.

*Meghan Johnson*

*mjohnson@threadalaska.org*