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To: [Sen. Pete Kelly](#); sen.anna.mackinnon@akle.gov; [Sen. Peter Micciche](#); [Sen. Mike Dunleavy](#); [Sen. Lyman Hoffman](#); [Sen. Donny Olson](#); [Sen. Click Bishop](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
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Hello, my name is Deanna Hobbs, I am a Juneau resident, a junior at Thunder Mountain High School, a Teen Council member, and a healthy sexuality advocate. Over the past two years I have participated in over 300 hours of volunteer work focused around prevention, community outreach projects, advocacy, and peer education.

I have attended Lead On for Peace and Equality-a youth conference focused on healthy relationships and respect-, which was the encouraging push that inspired a group of teens, including I, whom last year created a 5 and a half minute video focused around healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, and nonviolence-this has gotten 1,328 views. This last Saturday we accepted a Spirit of Youth "Service to Peer" award for this video.

This last Friday, five other teens and I hosted an event at the Yacht Club called TeenTopia, which we have been planning since November. Our video was played in front of around 200 teenagers who attended, and then we asked them discussion questions to prompt them to think deeply about the issues brought up in the video. We have also done similar activities in the High School health classes.

One of the most important comments I received after TeenTopia was from a teenage girl who recently moved to Alaska, she said:

"The reason I moved up here was because I was in that kind of relationship, experiencing many of the different kinds of the abuse highlighted in the video. It was really, really bad. But last night was truly inspiring; seeing everyone come together and hearing people talk about it. It was really great."

I highlight this comment because it shows that currently, Alaska is doing something right.

The programs that have made these opportunities available (Lead On! For Peace and Equality, Stand Up Speak Up, Spirit of Youth, etc.) have guided me to being a contributing member of society, while impacting my peers in a positive, empowering way. If these organizations lost their funding, powerful youth-led projects, like this video or TeenTopia, would be impossible.

I am here today because these programs are so important to me and the people around me.

Without encouraging, inspiring organizations focused on teenagers, our youth will never experience leadership, self-empowerment, healthy relationships, problem solving and communication skills, or how to use their voice in an environment outside of school or home.

I strongly oppose the budget cut of prevention programs in Alaska because I have seen the wonderful things that they achieve, and how many people in our community benefit from teenagers having the chance to contribute and focus their time and energy into something great.

Deanna Hobbs, 17