

From: [Erin Hollingsworth](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: public testimony on SB 139
Date: Tuesday, March 08, 2016 4:12:57 PM

Dear Senate Committee Finance Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed operating budget. I appreciate your time and consideration. The state is being faced with difficult times and I understand that there are many requests for a limited fund.

I would like to highlight again my concern for the continued funding for the OWL broadband program, the early literacy programs and public broadcasting. All of these services are vital to the daily life on the North Slope. Below are a few examples:

- Recently, Tuzzy Consortium Library was able to host Iñisagvik College's 30 hour OSHA Maritime Standards course via the OWL network. Eight students received advanced education that will better prepare them for employment because of this service. The economic and education benefits of funding OWL go beyond the obvious as well; matching federal e-rate funds for this grant also contribute to providing access opportunities to many rural Alaskans. The funding of this connectivity allows for online access for many of Alaska's most remote and rural communities.

- Early literacy funding is also vital to all Alaskans. Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and the Pre K grants all work to ensure that our children achieve kindergarten readiness by age five. The first months of a baby's life are crucial for brain development. The cognitive growth that takes place during this time is key to a child's future academic success. These children will be tomorrow's leaders and it is best to equip them with any advantage possible. The North Slope Imagination Library, which is operated with help and support from Best Beginnings, has an 85% enrollment. This means that 85% of the eligible children will enter kindergarten with 60 books in their homes. These families are being equipped with tools to help the children be prepared to learn when they enter school.

- Public broadcasting is a major concern in Barrow and on the North Slope. KBRW, the public radio station, is the means for dissemination of vital information regarding weather, community health notices, public safety and local government. The school and borough closures are broadcast through this medium. The radio is used to notify the community when the drinking water needs to be boiled and when the villages are under rabies quarantine. Public radio is also how average citizens can participate in assembly meetings, school board meetings, and other forms of local government. It is also a vital source of information for the hunters and whalers who depend upon the local weather forecasts. There is no other service

on the North Slope that can replace what KBRW does for the community.

Thank you again for your time.

Respectfully,

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