

From: [Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Medicaid Expansion
Date: Monday, March 30, 2015 3:26:41 PM

· **ASK:** Please support the federal authority to bring in \$1.1 billion, through Medicaid expansion, to backfill some of the cuts to programs that serve seniors and people with disabilities. Medicaid expansion will support basic health insurance for low-income Alaskans who earn less than \$20,314 per year. With more Alaskans receiving basic health care, there will be fewer people requiring use of the expensive acute services and fewer state dollars spent on emergency room visits, prisons, and nursing homes.

People with disabilities tend to be high end users due to higher needs. Medicaid can help support these individuals as well as families who fall into the 'working poor' category. Medicaid access can help with early intervention and preventing crisis and overutilization of emergency room treatment, not to mention maintaining health!

Early Intervention

· **THANK YOU** for adding 20 new Frontline Social Workers. Frontline Social Workers provide case planning, home visits to families, investigations of harm, and are responsible for ensuring children have safe and appropriate foster care placements. This addition will help reduce the caseloads in Alaska's overburdened foster care system. Support the subcommittee recommendation to add Frontline Social Workers.

· **THANK YOU** for adding back funds to maintain Alaska's WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho) program. WWAMI allows Alaskans to have a high quality regional medical school without the high cost of an independent medical school. For every 20 students who participate in WWAMI, Alaska gets 17 students back in the state practicing medicine. Support the subcommittee recommendation for maintaining the WWAMI program.

This will help us provide for our own medical needs and should reduce the need for folks to travel out of region/ state for treatment.

· **ASK:** Thank you for adding \$320,000 for early learning programs, but keep in mind the remaining cuts to early learning (preschool) will cause the elimination of many programs that serve Alaska's youngest citizens and their families. Research shows that at-risk children with quality pre-kindergarten interventions are less likely to require educational remediation, more likely to be successful in school and the workforce, less likely to experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), more likely to remain off public assistance, and 70% less likely to commit violent crimes.

Early identification for children with disabilities and those who experience trauma or with little access to educational opportunities will give our youth a better chance at success, help build resiliency and prevent higher needs in their future, not only educationally, but in employment and in life!

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