

Dear Governor Walker,

I am writing a letter in support of HCR21. I am a member of Jesuit Volunteer Corps NW/Americorps, and I am serving for a year in Juneau at the Zach Gordon Youth Center. My primary responsibility as a full-time volunteer at the Zach Gordon Youth Center is to build relationships with youth, many of whom who have experienced or are currently experiencing childhood trauma.

The youth who frequent the center are brilliant human beings with ample potential, but they are vulnerable to developing dire physical, emotional, and mental health issues on account of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Many of the youth I work with already exhibit the negative effects of trauma through behavioral issues, depression and anxiety, and unhealthy habits like drug and alcohol use.

I am concerned that Juneau, and the state of Alaska, lacks adequate policies and programs to address and prevent childhood trauma. Studies suggest that Alaskans experience Adverse Childhood Experiences at a higher frequency than the national average. Widespread instances of childhood trauma are detrimental to individuals and the community as a whole. The government ought to recognize ACEs and develop comprehensive programs to prevent childhood trauma and provide healing for individuals who have experienced childhood trauma. Not only will programs addressing ACEs build stronger and healthier communities, they will save the state millions of dollars annually in health care costs, corrections, and substance abuse.

Thank you for your consideration,
Alexandra Douglas