

**From:** Sara Saxton [<mailto:ssaxton@ci.wasilla.ak.us>]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 20, 2017 9:50 AM  
**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** FY18 DEECD Proposed Budget Amendments

Representative Ortiz,

Unfortunately, we ran out of time and I was unable to testify this morning during the public testimony period on the proposed budget amendments to the FY18 DEECD budget.

As the President of the Alaska Library Association I have had countless opportunities over the last year to see and hear about the ways that Online With Libraries and Live Homework Help have had positive impacts on learning and connectivity in Alaska. As you heard this morning in the testimonies of Kim Baxter, Marcy Hawkins, Erin Hollingsworth, and Christy Burke, rural communities, students, and the working poor of Alaska rely heavily upon OWL. As a librarian in Wasilla, one of the more heavily populated areas of the state, we are just coming into those benefits with the recent completion of our new library and our OWL installation. In the last 4 months since we opened we have had several requests for OWL services; from Social Security hearings to statewide PTA meetings, there is a distinct need for the connections that OWL provides.

I urge you to retain full funding for OWL in the amount of \$661,400. The subsidies for broadband are necessary for remote libraries to continue with a usable level of bandwidth and has leveraged as much as \$2 million a year in federal E-Rate funds. The level of bandwidth allows adults and students at public libraries to access SLED, the databases, Live Homework Help, and the Alaska Digital Archives.

Another portion of the OWL allocation funds the E-Rate Coordinator contract. The coordinator assists both public libraries and K-12 school districts in their annual applications for E-Rate funds and has successfully communicated Alaska's special circumstances to the relevant federal agencies (FCC and USAC).

The third portion of funding goes to maintaining the videoconference network. Representative Talerico claims that cuts to Online With Libraries will have no significant impact on the K-12 classroom, which is patently untrue. Successful students need support both inside and outside the classroom and OWL provides that support through equal access to the resources of the state library (databases, Live Homework Help, etc.) and leveraging of federal funds.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to creating a better future for all Alaskans.  
Sara

Sara Saxton, MLIS  
President, 2016-2017  
Alaska Library Association  
Youth Services Librarian  
Wasilla Public Library  
907.864.9173

**From:** Birgit Meany [<mailto:birgit.mearly@ilisagvik.edu>]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 20, 2017 10:19 AM  
**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Continued Funding for the Alaska OWL Program

Good Morning Mr. Ortiz,

My name is Birgit Meany, and I am writing to you on behalf of the OWL (Online with Libraries) program, which is under consideration to no longer receive funding. In my role of Dean of Academic Affairs for Iḷisaġvik College in Utqiaġvik (Barrow), I can attest to the importance of this program in providing access to education in the rural areas of the state, such as the North Slope, where I live.

My region has eight communities that receive educational programming through videoconference for numerous subjects, to include language, history, and cultural programming. In addition, we have students from outside the region who also benefit from this service. Dual credit students (high school students who are taking college classes) are another target population, who, thanks to the OWL program, have access to postsecondary education and can get a head start on their college education.

On the North Slope, as in other rural regions of the state, OWL supports local public and combined community/school libraries and the communities they serve by supplying improved bandwidth that allows access to state and federal e-government services, applications, licenses, as well as educational opportunities I mentioned above. The lack of bandwidth is a major barrier for local residents, and places restrictions on the College as to the curriculum that we are able to deliver, so we are thankful that the OWL program helps to mitigate that situation.

OWL also supplies computers, video conferencing equipment and services, and training to Alaska public libraries in all regions of the state. Many of our residents do not have Internet access in their homes, so OWL supports K-12 learning by providing afterschool, evening, or weekend access to computers for those who don't own them and wireless access for students equipped with laptops from their schools.

In conclusion, while I am well aware that funding is limited, I would ask that the legislature carefully weigh the benefits of the OWL program, particularly in rural, already underserved areas of the state, before making a final decision on which programs to eliminate and which to continue funding.

Respectfully,

**Birgit Meany, Ed.D.**

Dean of Academic Affairs

Iḷisaġvik College

Utuqiaġvik (Barrow), AK 99723

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**From:** Jill Gann [<mailto:gann.jill@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 20, 2017 8:09 AM  
**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Support our Alaska Libraries

Please consider the full support of OWL and Live Homework Help as this has a great impact on our children in Alaska.

Owl supports afterschool programs and provides access for those students who do not have computers at home or access for those who do not have wired access at home.

Many local libraries in small and remote communities are located in schools so the broadband helps students access additional resources during the school day.

Live homework help is a major help for students struggling in math and also supports many other subjects and students utilize this service to help them with their homework challenges. Many of these students do not have access to a tutor or help any other way.

Please continue to support OWL and Live Homework help by fully funding them.

Thank you

Jill Gann  
Kenai, Alaska

**From:** Laura Thomas [<mailto:backdirt@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Monday, February 20, 2017 10:46 AM

**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Harriet Drummond <[Rep.Harriet.Drummond@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Harriet.Drummond@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Justin Parish <[Rep.Justin.Parish@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Justin.Parish@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Zach Fansler <[Rep.Zach.Fansler@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Zach.Fansler@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Ivy Spohnholz <[Rep.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov)>; Rep. David Talerico <[Rep.David.Talerico@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.David.Talerico@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Jennifer Johnston <[Rep.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Chuck Kopp <[Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Steve Thompson <[Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov)>

**Cc:** Christie Burke <[christie.burke@tuzzy.org](mailto:christie.burke@tuzzy.org)>; Erin Hollingsworth <[erin.hollingsworth@tuzzy.org](mailto:erin.hollingsworth@tuzzy.org)>

**Subject:** don't cut OWL funding!

Dear Representative Ortiz, and Members of the House Finance and Budget Sub-Committee,  
I live in Utqiagvik (Barrow). **I strongly urge the House Finance and Budget Sub-Committee to ensure that OWL funding for Public Libraries in Alaska IS NOT CUT!**

Here in Utqiagvik, we rely on OWL for instruction through UAF, UAA, and Iñisagvik College. To cut to the chase: to cut OWL funding cuts the ability of people on the North Slope to access college and university classes. It means we would have to relocate to Anchorage, or Fairbanks (or elsewhere) to pursue a higher education.

I personally have been the beneficiary of the OWL network in taking several courses and trainings. Most recently, I enrolled in an Iñupiaq studies class taught by Ron Brower at UAF. In the previous year, I was also able to take a class through UAF that allowed me to obtain my CFPM (Certified Food Protection Manager) certificate. This may not sound like a big deal, but the class I took on the OWL network allowed me to get my food manager certificate so I could get a job!!

On the financial side of things, the high cost of internet and broadband access in rural Alaska means that many of our low and lower income community members cannot afford to pay for regular internet access. This means that many of our community members rely on internet access at Public Libraries, like Tuzzy Library.

As you are no doubt aware, **in 2011 the United Nations Special Rapporteur defined access to internet (broadband) a human right.**

The report also notes that **states have a responsibility to ensure the internet access is broadly available.**

Furthermore, **the Special Rapporteur considers cutting off users from internet access, regardless of the justification provided, to be disproportionate and thus a violation of article 19, paragraph 3, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.**

By cutting funding for the OWL network, you would be cutting rural Alaskan users from internet access for jobs, higher education, training, and ability to apply for state and federal benefits. The state of Alaska would be violating the human rights of rural Alaskans. This would directly affect me, my family, and the North Slope communities.

**I strongly urge the House Finance and Budget Sub-Committee to ensure that OWL funding for Public Libraries in Alaska IS NOT CUT!**

Thank you for this opportunity to make my comments known.

Respectfully,  
Laura Thomas  
PO Box 1078  
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**From:** Erin Hollingsworth [<mailto:erin.hollingsworth@tuzzy.org>]

**Sent:** Monday, February 20, 2017 10:59 AM

**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>

**Cc:** Rep. Harriet Drummond <[Rep.Harriet.Drummond@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Harriet.Drummond@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Justin Parish <[Rep.Justin.Parish@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Justin.Parish@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Zach Fansler <[Rep.Zach.Fansler@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Zach.Fansler@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Ivy Spohnholz <[Rep.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov)>; Rep. David Talerico <[Rep.David.Talerico@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.David.Talerico@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Jennifer Johnston <[Rep.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Chuck Kopp <[Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Steve Thompson <[Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov)>

**Subject:** HB 57 public testimony regarding OWL funding

Dear Representative Ortiz and members of the House Finance and Budget Sub-Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to hear my spoken testimony on HB 57. I would like to follow up my concerns in writing.

The proposed reduction in funding to the Online With Libraries (OWL) Program is an attempt to balance the state budget on the backs of the rural/remote working poor. As a bush librarian, I can personally testify as to the impact the OWL program has in my community. I remember the slow connection speeds prior to the implementation of OWL and I am also very familiar with the fact that many of the smaller libraries across the state depend upon this funding to provide much needed internet connection to patrons. This connection is vital to Alaskans. Access to the internet is a basic human right in today's modern world. Applying for jobs, participating in government, and pursuit of education all require access to the internet.

I am concerned because the recent statements from FCC Chairman Pai about net neutrality could have a huge impact on the already exorbitant fees many of us in rural/remote locations pay. The FCC has recently gone after the Lifeline program service providers that allow for internet and telephone access to low income households. I am also concerned about what this could mean for the e-rate funding, which is the federal funding that supports Alaskan libraries in conjunction with the OWL funds. With state funds stripped and federal budgets looking questionable, thousands of Alaskans may potentially be left without internet access. With federal policy potentially calling upon states to do more and the state removing the funding from the budget, we will be left with nothing. The working poor of Alaska will be left without an online connection.

Use of OWL, and libraries in general, has increased. The statistics for this year's videoconference use are already greater than all of last fiscal year's statistics, with many more months to go. We are booking the videoconferences months in advance because there is demand. There is also a demand for the public access to internet. I have personally helped library patrons with their online SNAP forms, the online process to renew a driver's license when the DMV in town is closed, the online process of applying for a job, and that scary first step taking online courses towards a higher degree. Many of these opportunities would not be available to rural/remote Alaskans because of the prohibitive cost of internet. Public libraries in Alaska, with the support of OWL funds, work to bridge the digital divide.

I urge you to reconsider your stance on the OWL funding. This is a program that is beneficial to thousands of Alaskans that should be grown, not cut.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact me if I can answer any questions or address concerns.

Respectfully,

Erin Hollingsworth, MLIS, M.Ed.  
Public Services Librarian  
Tuzzy Consortium Library  
Iñsaḡvik College

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Utqiagvik, AK 99723  
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**From:** Lisa Pearson [<mailto:lisap@firstcitylibraries.org>]

**Sent:** Monday, February 20, 2017 12:00 PM

**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>

**Subject:** Funding for the OWL network

Dear Representative Ortiz,

I am writing to voice my strong support for continued funding for the Online With Libraries (OWL) program. As a librarian, I can attest to the importance of the OWL videoconferencing network to the people of District 36. The Ketchikan Public Library is a part of the OWL network, and we have used the videoconferencing in many different ways.

People from Ketchikan and Prince of Wales Island have used OWL to attend Disability Hearings with the Social Security Administration. By being able to appear before the federal judge using the network, they are saved the cost and inconvenience of traveling to Juneau or Anchorage to participate in the hearings. This is a direct benefit to the disabled in southern Southeast Alaska.

The Association for the Education of Young Children offers continuing education classes for child care providers. Day care operators in Craig, Petersburg, and Metlakatla have been able to participate in these classes via the OWL network. Their professional development helps them improve the care they provide to children. This is a direct benefit to the children and families in southern Southeast Alaska.

People interested in working in the mining industry are able to take Mine Safety and Health Administration certification classes here in Ketchikan by using the OWL network. These classes are taught by instructors in Anchorage, but by using the videoconferencing services of OWL, our local patrons are able to stay here in the community. This is a direct benefit to the workforce development here in southern Southeast Alaska.

Times are difficult, and finances are tight. But the services provided by OWL can have wide-ranging benefits for many residents of Alaska, and can be an economical way to provide education, training, and services over our large state. I urge the Legislature to keep funding for the OWL program.

thank you for your time,

Lisa Pearson

Lisa Pearson, MLIS  
Adult Services Librarian  
Ketchikan Public Library  
1110 Copper Ridge Lane  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901  
(907) 228-2304



**From:** Christie Burke [<mailto:christie.burke@tuzzy.org>]

**Sent:** Monday, February 20, 2017 11:59 AM

**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>

**Subject:** Please Fully Fund OWL

Dear Chairman Ortiz,

I am writing to you as a professional librarian as well as a citizen of rural Alaska, with an urgent appeal to continue full funding for the Online With Libraries (OWL) program.

Many others have testified on behalf of the importance of the OWL program to rural Alaskans, and I would like to build upon their statements and examples with numbers and statistics that demonstrate both the success of the program in Alaska's remote and rural areas, the growth of this program over time, and its potential for continued use and growth.

OWL provides funding for basic internet services for rural libraries such as our village libraries across the North Slope, increased bandwidth for rural libraries and their users, as well as videoconference services that provide in many cases the only access the citizens of our remote areas have to higher education, workforce development trainings, Alaska Native language, history and cultural classes and programs, health education trainings, distance job interviews.

This issue is all the more urgent as we consider a future where federal dollars for E-rate funding for internet service is uncertain at best. The consequence for the citizens of rural Alaska if internet access was defunded at both state and federal levels in the same year would be disastrous.

Library and information services that have moved forward in today's online environment would be set back tremendously, resulting in an increase in the disparity between those citizens that have access to information and those who do not.

We can look at numerical representations of the growth of OWL program funded internet use, computer use, wireless use, and videoconference services at Tuzzy Library over the past several years as an example of the need for the OWL program, of the success of the OWL program, and of the growth of the OWL program in rural Alaska.

	<b>Wireless</b>	<b>Computer Use</b>	<b>Web visits</b>	<b>Videoconference</b>	<b>Vcon Attendees</b>
FY2012	1136	14846	98579	0	
FY2013	1992	20218	126572	0	
FY2014	2368	22451	137537	41	41
FY2015	4774	17846	138406	23	83
FY 2016	9622	18201	178960	81	171
FY2017 to date	4122	8627	92520	90	170

In particular the OWL videoconference service has supported the following types of programs over the years:

- § BLaST! Grant meetings
- § Iḷisaġvik College courses – information technology, education, **and Iṅupiaq studies**
- § OSHA Maritime Standards course for Workforce Development at Iḷisaġvik College
- § UAF “Strengthening Families Workshop”
- § Barrow Early Learning Center meetings
- § Private use for UAA distance learning
- § Future Educators for the Arctic meetings
- § Science Camp presenters
- § Tuzzy Library staff meetings with Village library staff– Summer reading planning sessions
- § Job interviews on-slope, in-state, out of state and locations as far away as Australia.

In closing, I urge you to consider the successes and the widespread benefit of the OWL program to the citizens of Alaska, and the real cost of defunding this program that will be realized in diminished access to higher education, workforce trainings, job opportunities and online information to the population of our State.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Christie Burke

**Christie Burke** | *Director* | **Tuzzy Consortium Library** | Iḷisaġvik College

P.O. Box 2130 Barrow, AK 99723 | 907.852.4050 | [www.tuzzy.org](http://www.tuzzy.org)

-----Original Message-----

From: Sarah Ellis [[mailto:s.lynn\\_ellis@yahoo.com](mailto:s.lynn_ellis@yahoo.com)]

Sent: Monday, February 20, 2017 11:54 AM

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>

Subject: Public Testimony- Alaska OWL funding

Good morning Chairman Ortiz,

Please accept my testimony below, regarding the proposed cuts to OWL funding.

Thank you,

Sarah Ellis

907-878-0021

My name is Sarah Ellis, and I am a resident of Barrow, Alaska. The library, here and in many rural communities, is a community hub. Staff go above and beyond- and do more with less to provide services to residents.

The reduction or cut to the OWL program would cause a significant negative impact- especially in rural communities with more limited resources. The computers, video conferencing equipment and services, and internet/bandwidth available through the program- paired with available trainings, are not something that can be matched at the local level if the program funding is cut.

The OWL program allows expanded learning hours for K-12 students, provides resources for homeschoolers, and facilitates adult learning. This support is essential; limiting educational opportunities available to residents in already academically challenged areas is a disservice to those residents.

Outside of the direct benefits to residents that the program provides, cutting program funding does not make fiscal sense. OWL funds can leverage approximately \$2 million of E-Rate funding to support bandwidth costs for public libraries.

As a child I spent good portions of my time in a library, it was a place for learning and imagination. As an adult learner I spent ample time taking advantage of the library services available. The library gives our residents a community hub, a safe place of learning. Please protect this place and it's funding.

**From:** Steve Rollins [<mailto:ansjr3@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 21, 2017 8:20 AM

**To:** Rep. Daniel Ortiz <[Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Harriet Drummond <[Rep.Harriet.Drummond@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Harriet.Drummond@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Justin Parish <[Rep.Justin.Parish@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Justin.Parish@akleg.gov)>; [representative.zach.fansler@akleg.gov](mailto:representative.zach.fansler@akleg.gov); Rep. Ivy Spohnholz <[Rep.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Jennifer Johnston <[Rep.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Chuck Kopp <[Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov)>; Rep. Steve Thompson <[Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Steve.Thompson@akleg.gov)>

**Subject:** Funding for Online with Libraries (OWL)

Good Morning,

I am writing in support of the OWL program managed by the Education and Early Development Department and the State Library. The recommendation to delete \$261,800 from this program is shortsighted. We should be investing in reliable Internet and video conferencing capacity. The subsidies for broadband are necessary for remote libraries to continue with a usable level of bandwidth and will leveraged as much as \$2 million a year in federal E-Rate funds. A portion of the OWL funding is for the E-Rate Coordinator contract and helps both public libraries and K-12 school districts in applying for their E-Rate funding.

Thank you for your consideration.

Steve Rollins  
12840 Lupine Rd  
Anchorage, AK 99516

Testimony  
Monday, February 20, 2017

To: Representative Daniel Ortiz, Chair; members of the Finance Committee, Education Sub-Committee

I know that your subcommittee is challenged to find savings in the Department of Education and Early Development budget as the bulk of DEED funding goes out to communities through the K-12 funding formula, but I am writing to request that the proposal to reduce the Alaska State Library's OWL (Online With Libraries) be reconsidered.

The proposed 30% reduction follows a previous 14% cut to OWL. For a program that costs less than a dollar per Alaskan to begin with, this cut will be harmful to the program and, in the end, insignificant in the face of our FY18 deficit in view of the ultimate cost-savings that the OWL program achieves.

A key part of OWL funding goes to broadband subsidies to small and remote public libraries where the cost of bandwidth is among the highest in the nation. The OWL subsidies allow the libraries to leverage the state and local contributions to receive as much as \$2 million in some years in federal E-Rate funds. This bandwidth allows K-12 students, home schoolers, and adults in public libraries to access online resources such as SLED (State Library Electronic Doorway), Live Homework Help, and the Alaska Digital Archives, all funded by the state as well as a broad range of electronic resources that require more bandwidth than email does.

Another portion of OWL funds maintains a public library videoconferencing network that allows public and home schoolers to access videoconference opportunities such as a high school physics class for a Prince of Wales Island public school student and Unalaska high school students to have interactive meetings with representatives of trades apprentice programs based in Anchorage, to name two examples. The network has also allowed some state agencies to avoid expensive in-state travel by scheduling meetings, training, public information, and depositions on a secure network.

Another portion of the budget funds the contract for the DEED State Library E-Rate Coordinator. The coordinator assists both public libraries and K-12 school districts that don't have in-house E-Rate coordinators (or that have coordinators that are new to the assignment) in negotiating the ever-changing and complex E-Rate application process. Furthermore, the E-Rate Coordinator has been able to communicate Alaska's special considerations in broadband deployment to relevant federal agencies (the FCC and USAC), which has resulted in modifications and changes to E-Rate program regulations and procedures.

OWL is a modest program that leverages federal funding and offers the possibilities of savings in the State travel budget while it offers educational and informational services. This is exactly the type of program we should be maintaining in our quest to produce a conservative and sustainable FY18 budget.

Instead of making continual drastic cuts to small programs like OWL and others on the DEED budget amendment list, now is the time to give serious consideration to the various proposals for revenue diversification.

Submitted by:

Sue Sherif

PO 82668

Fairbanks, AK 99708

Residence Address: 1966 Camomile

Fairbanks, AK 99712

House District 6