



**TESTIMONY – DEED Budget Amendments (20 February 2017)**  
**Trevor Storrs, Executive Director**

- Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on DEED’s budget amendments. I’m Trevor Storrs, Executive Director of the Alaska Children’s Trust, which is the statewide lead organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- I would like to speak on the following amendments:
  - Talerico: Pre-K Grants (-\$500,000)
  - Talerico: Parents As Teachers (-\$100,000)
  - Johnston: Pre-K Grants (-\$200,000)
  - Johnston: Exec Admin/Erin’s Law (-\$200,000)
- Children are our most valuable resource. As our state struggles to find a solution to the nearly three-billion-dollar deficit, we know the best return on investment is to invest earlier than later.
- James Heckman, a noble laureate economist, has shown that for every dollar we invest in early childhood we save taxpayers up to \$7 long-term. Heckman says, “In an era of tight government budgets...the real question is how to use the available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription. Invest in the very young”.
- Over the past decade, we have come to understand one of the most effective ways of preventing child abuse and neglect is by addressing the social determinants that foster an environment that promotes trauma and does not build the skill set (i.e. resilience) necessary to manage it.
- By investing in our children at the start of their lives versus addressing their struggles later in life, we begin to address the issue plaguing our fiscal struggle – high demand.
- How do we do this?
  - Zero to five is the most critical time in a children’s life. It is a time that can greatly influence on who that child becomes as an adult. It is a time when the vast majority of brain development occurs. By decreasing Pre-K grants, we are going against decades of research. We may save today but we will pay more tomorrow. Early childhood development programs help remove many of the factors that put children at risk of experiencing adverse childhood experiences – otherwise known as ACES.
  - ACEs cause most of the physical, social and behavioral ills our communities struggle with every day. These include diabetes, obesity, not graduating, substance abuse, homelessness, and entering the justice system.
  - Erin’s Law – it addresses some of the greatest adversity experienced by a child. Erin’s law is a part of the Safe Children’s Act. This Act ensures students and/or teachers are equipped to prevent, identify and act if necessary to child sexual abuse, teen violence, suicide, substance abuse and/or to disabilities caused by substance abuse. This funding ensures this act is achieved.
  - Parents as Teachers is a home visiting program. Home visiting programs have been identified as one of the top, evidence based program that prevents adversity like child abuse and neglect.

Parents as Teachers provide high risk families with the tools they need to ensure their child grows up in a safe, stable and nurturing home.

- All of these programs go up stream – they are primary prevention. If we wait to enact tertiary prevention, we have lost.
- Alaska Children’s Trust supports investment in early childhood development. Thank you for your time today and I would be happy to answer any questions.