

Operating  
Budget Public  
Testimony:  
Early Childhood  
Education

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Luella iyatunguk <lue07ella@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2017 10:50 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Kawerak early head start

I am devastated to see that the kawerak, inc early head start program is at potential budget cut of 100%. This would directly impact both my children, who benefit from the program! There are already limited resources in rural Alaska and cutting this program, shuts down all the availability of early head start for our region! I hope to see that this program can continue to provide services!

Sincerely,

Luella Iyatunguk- mother of John (2 years old) and Genevieve (6 months old), whom both are enrolled in early head start!

Sent from my iPhone

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From: Torwirt, Chris <ctorwirt@fcmhs.org>  
To: "Finance.Committee@akleg.gov" <Finance.Committee@akleg.gov>  
Date: 03/15/2017 01:45:13 PM AKDT  
Subject: Early Childhood Program Funding

Greetings Legislative Representatives,

My name is Chris Torwirt. I am the Chief Operations Officer for Fairbanks Community Mental Health Services in Fairbanks, Alaska. I just learned that the Senate Finance Committee submitted a budget plan that excludes all funding for early childhood programs in Alaska. As a provider of mental health services for children and adults with severe and often disabling mental illness, I can tell you that hundreds of them *would not be* in our services if interventions in early childhood had been provided to them. Our goal as an agency is to prevent mental illness before it becomes severe. In the same way, early childhood programs help children get off to a good start and helps parents learn valuable parenting skills. Providing a solid foundation on which children and families can grow is good for the future of our state and country. We make the investment in prevention rather than in treating the severe consequences of symptoms because it is the responsible and right thing to do. I know for certain that it costs incredibly more to repair lives than it does to prevent future dysfunction. There is no silver bullet. Common sense and logic will have to do. It is not logical to remove beneficial services that support the growth of healthy families and individuals. Our children are the future. If we fail to invest in them and their well-being now, I fear that our country will not be able to compete in this ever changing world. Early childhood programs help children recognize the value of education. They give children and families access to healthy food choices. They identify physical and mental health issues in early stages. They identify issues of abuse, neglect and homelessness. It is counter-intuitive to remove all funding for the programs that achieve so much. Thank you for taking time to consider my perspective on this issue. Please let me know if I can be of service.

Respectfully,  
Chris Torwirt, M.A., LPCC  
Chief Operations Officer, FCHMS  
907-371-1379  
ctorwirt@fcmhs.org

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**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Ken Weber <colby38@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2017 1:24 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Early Learning Programs

To whom it may concern;

I am a citizen of the Juneau area and an advocate for early childhood learning and development. I am also a former teacher from the state of Florida, where I saw first hand the importance of early learning programs. The more we can invest in our population when they are young, the less we'll have to invest in them when they get older and the more they as individuals will invest back into their communities. Early learning programs lead to a successful academic career, leads to college or a trade school, which in turns strengthens a community from the inside out. Let's invest in our future by investing in the population that's going to inherit it. PLEASE! I would prefer you give me an income tax over further cuts to such vital programs.

Respectfully,

Kenneth M. Weber, II

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Karen Tarver <Karen@ermcpa.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2017 1:16 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Proposed budget cuts 100% of funding for all Pre-K, Parents as Teachers, and Best Beginnings Imagination Library

Hello,

I am writing to ask that the funding for early learning programs be maintained. As a parent I have seen the impact first hand that introducing kids to learning at an early age makes. Many families do not have the knowledge or did not experience this themselves as a child and so we need education for parents (new ones especially) and resources for them to help ensure their children have opportunities to learn.

I would rather see an income tax and/or state sales tax than budget cuts such as these. I can't attend the hearing on Thursday in person so am providing this email as my support to maintain funding for the important early learning programs.

Thank you – Karen

**Karen J. Tarver, CPA | Partner**

[Karen@ermcpa.com](mailto:Karen@ermcpa.com)

**Elgee Rehfeld Mertz, LLC | [www.ermcpa.com](http://www.ermcpa.com)**

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## **Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Joy Neyhart <jmneyhart@alaska.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2017 12:45 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Cc:** jlyon@aeyc-sea.org  
**Subject:** Please do not cut funding for early childhood services

Dear Members of the Finance Committee:

I am a pediatrician who has been caring for kids in Juneau for over 16 years, and I serve the state of Alaska as a member of the Medical Board and a reviewer for the Maternal Child Death Review.

Eliminating funding for programs that are vital to educating young children and supporting young families will increase costs for Alaska in the long run. High quality childcare and early childhood education as well as the programs that support young children improve the ability of young children to achieve in school past kindergarten, and improve the ability of parents to be productive members of the workforce. Both of these outcomes lead to a stronger Alaskan economy.

Eliminating these supportive programs will drive productive young families from Alaska and will increase costs for healthcare, Child Protective Services and incarceration programs and facilities.

There is no more important investment Alaska can make than in supporting our young families with children from birth to 5.

Please do not eliminate funding for early childhood services.

Joy M. Neyhart, DO, FAAP  
Rainforest Pediatric Care  
3268 Hospital Drive, Suite E  
Juneau, AK 99801  
907 463 1210

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## **Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Christy McMurren <christym907@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2017 8:21 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Pre K and Early Head Start

I am writing in support of funding Pre-K school for 4 year olds, especially for those children in Title 1 school areas. I am also in support of funding Early Head Start for babies and toddlers. Below is a fact sheet highlighting the benefits of that program. The data is clear that investing in early childhood programs reaps benefits for the rest of their lives. This is important for every sector of our society, never mind the moral obligation we have to do good by our children.

### **What Are Some of the Highlights From EHS' Impact Study?**

The EHS Research and Evaluation Project, a rigorous, Congressionally mandated, large-scale random-assignment evaluation concluded that EHS makes a positive difference in areas associated with children's success in school, family self-sufficiency, and parental support of child development. Such outcomes reinforce how EHS provides a sturdy foundation on which children and families in poverty engage through education.

### **Children's Developmental Outcomes**

- Children in EHS were more likely to go on to formal preschool programs (including child care, Head Start, and pre-k) than their peers who did not participate.
- At 3 years old, children performed better on a range of measures, such as cognitive, language, and social-emotional development.
- At 5 years old, children who had EHS followed by a formal preschool program such as Head Start did the best.
- During the 5th Grade Follow-Up Study, children who had received continuous early childhood services and then attended an elementary school with a lower percentage of children receiving free or reduced priced lunches continued to do better.
- Overall, there were positive impacts for all sub-groups, particularly African American children.

### **Children's Health Outcomes**

- Participation in an EHS program increased a child's access to a medical and dental home.
- 97% of children in EHS received continuous accessible health care and had health insurance.
- 91% of EHS children with health insurance were enrolled in the Medicaid/Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT), CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) or a state sponsored child health

insurance program.

- 86% of children in EHS have up-to-date medical screenings by the end of the program.

Home visiting programs, such as Parents As Teachers, are also showing that learning opportunities and support for parents of very young children are worth every penny and then some. If we fail these children, then shame on us.

I am not so in favor of funding Best Beginnings. I don't know what they do other than manage the Imagination Library. If I had to choose, I would fund Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers and Pre-K in that order. The earlier we can intervene in a child's life, the more bang for our buck we get. It's simple math.

Thank you for your consideration.

Christy McMurren  
Anchorage, Ak



**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Allyson Fennimore <allyf@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2017 6:49 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Early Childhood Funding!

I went to college for four years. My major was Early Childhood Education. I have worked with young children in some way or another since 1995. Please support funding for Early Childhood programs. I know it may not seem like a critical field to fund, but for directors, teachers, parents, volunteers, and most of all the young children these funds provide. You have the opportunity to support young children's learning to help them have the quality Early Childhood programs that young children should have. As an Early Childhood teacher, please fund the Early Childhood field because I enjoy working with young children now as much as I ever have. If Early Childhood programs are not funded, I will have an even harder time working in the field I believe in with all my heart.

Sincerely,

Allyson Fennimore

## **Doniece Gott**

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**From:** jparkhurst <jparkhurst@alaska.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2017 10:37 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB22 Operating Budget Public Testimony

**Importance:** High

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I understand that making, keeping, & cutting a budget is difficult work. However, the first question that comes to my mind is, why are early childhood programs always the first to come to your minds when cutting the budget? Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and Pre-K programs are the foundation of quality early childhood programs. They give our children and their families the educational building blocks necessary for success in school and in becoming successful, productive members of society.

Young children and their families are the segment of our population who not only need the support, but actually deserve the support. After all, they are our future.

If you vote to cut the funding that supports these programs you are voting for a future with diminished leadership capabilities due to poor outcomes related to a lack of quality educational experiences. In order to ensure strong leaders in the future, we must provide quality educational opportunities to the youngest members of our society, the children.

The young children of today will become the leaders, teachers, scientists, entrepreneurs, and decision makers of tomorrow. In order to secure the best decision makers, entrepreneurs, scientists, teachers, and leaders in the future, we must invest in their futures today.

Please fund the Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and Pre-K programs at the 100% operating level. The future of our state depends on the young children of today getting the best opportunities available in early education programs.

Respectfully,

Jane Parkhurst

Parent, Early Childhood Educator, Concerned Citizen, & Voter

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Heather Payenna <cfs.spec@kawerak.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2017 11:47 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Early Childhood Resources

I've received word that there is discussion regarding cutting early childhood resources from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development state budget. I think this would be a very big mistake. I live and work in the Bering Straits region. Our communities heavily depend on the programs offered through our local Head Starts. As a foster parent of several children who have participated in Early Head Start and Head Start programs, the children I've had placed with me have made leaps and bounds from the time they've enter our home to the time they leave in part because of the EHS/HS programs they've been enrolled in. Our EHS/HS programs work very closely with our public school system and our regional hospital NSHC to meet the needs that EHS/HS children require (i.e. occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, home visits with parents, special education needs for language, speech, and hearing, etc.). Please reconsider budget your position on funding and continue to support Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

**Thank you,**

**Heather Payenna**

**CFS Specialist**

**PO Box 948**

**Nome, AK 99762**

**O: 907.443.4261**

**C: 907.434.6049**

**F: 907.443.4601**

**E: cfs.spec@kawerak.org**

March 16, 2017

Alaska State Legislature  
Senate Finance Committee  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Hoffman, Senator MacKinnon, Senator Bishop, Senator Dunleavy, Senator Micciche, Senator Von Imhof, and Senator Olson:

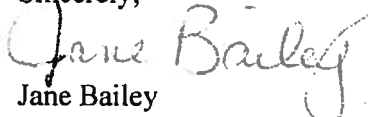
I am writing to provide public testimony regarding proposed budget amendments (proposed cuts) to the FY18 Department of Education and Early Development budget. I am specifically concerned about the proposed cuts to DEED's PreK budget. I urge the Legislature to make budget decisions that maintain or increase services and support for Alaska's preschool children.

Making high quality preschools available to all children in Alaska is an investment that pays for itself many times over. "Numerous studies have shown both short-term and long-term benefits for those who participate in high quality pre-k. Children enrolled in quality programs not only demonstrate higher academic achievement in the elementary grades, but are far less likely to need costly instructional services down the road and far more likely to succeed in school, both academically and socially, than their peers who did not attend pre-k" (Barth & Resnick, 2009, C-1). Estimates vary, but implementation of preschool results in an estimated long-term payback of \$3.78 to \$10.15 for every dollar spent, for a net savings of \$150 billion nationwide (Committee for Economic Development, 2006; Barth & Resnick, 2009).

The HighScope Perry Preschool Study studied 123 low-income, black children who were divided into two groups—one that received a comprehensive preschool program and a second group that received no early childhood program. Researchers compared the progress of these children until age 40, assessing educational progress, delinquency, earnings, arrests, savings, home ownership, etc. The results established that adults at age 40 who had preschool had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool (Schweinhart, Montie, Ziang, Barnett, Belfield, and Nores, 2005). 77% of the preschool group graduated from high school, compared with 60% from the control group (Schweinhart 2004). Preschool participants had higher scores on achievement tests between ages nine and fourteen and on literacy tests at ages nineteen and twenty-seven. In addition, 76% were employed at age forty—compared with 62% of non-participants—and averaged \$5,000 a year more in income."

I ask that you financially support an early childhood infrastructure at its current level or higher and continue to support the youngest, most impressionable learners in Alaska.

Sincerely,



Jane Bailey  
Early Childhood Coordinator  
Chugach School District

## **Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Karen Larson <kbitlarsen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2017 8:23 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Funding for Early Childhood Programs

Dear Finance Committee Members,

I am writing in support of funding for Best Beginnings and pre-Kindergarten programming for Alaskan children. I moved to Alaska in 1983 and have spent my career serving children and families from birth to five years old. I have seen the conditions that many of our families are living in and know the importance of having a support system that fosters healthy child development. Parenting is a difficult job that many are not trained to do. Birth to three are extremely important years for the formation of cognitive and social skills. Society benefits when growth is fostered by giving parents the information and support they need at home through programs such as Best Beginnings. By the age of three, children need the social interaction with others that is provided in the pre-K programs.

As an early childhood special education teacher, I have seen many children coming from households that are unsafe. The educational system has been the sole intervention program that teaches safe parenting and monitors the effects of adverse childhood experiences. Head Start provides this service and they are limited in the number of families they can serve, so state funding is essential to keep our children safe and thriving.

In conclusion, please consider funding for early childhood an essential service for the State of Alaska. I would gladly pay income tax or give up my PFD to see that these programs are properly funded.

Karen Larson  
6758 Marguerite St  
Juneau AK  
99801

March 16, 2017

Alaska State Legislature  
Senate Finance Committee  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Hoffman, Senator MacKinnon, Senator Bishop, Senator Dunleavy, Senator Micciche, Senator Von Imhof, and Senator Olson:

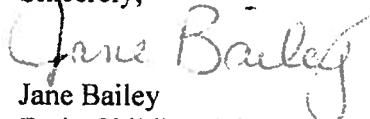
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I ask that you financially support an early childhood infrastructure at its current level or higher and continue to support the youngest, most impressionable learners in Alaska.

Sincerely,



Jane Bailey  
Early Childhood Coordinator  
Chugach School District

## **Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Laura Cisneros <lcisneros@bestbeginningsalaska.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2017 8:35 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Reinstate funding for early childhood programs

Good evening,

I am writing in support of State funding of early childhood programs in Alaska. Science has overwhelmingly demonstrated how critical the first years of a child's life are. It is a small window of opportunity that, when utilized, plays a key role in lifelong success. Early childhood programs work diligently to support children and families to make this most of it.

My personal passion for children and families brought me to Best Beginnings. I want to be clear, though I work for an organization that is impacted by your decision, this would be a request I would make of this committee were I not working for Best Beginnings. I want success for my neighbors and my community. It starts with the youngest among us.

Thank you,  
Laura Cisneros

**Laura Cisneros/Partnerships Director/ Best Beginnings**  
3350 Commercial Drive, Suite 104A, Anchorage, AK 99501 / P: 907.297.3311/ F: 907.297.3304  
[lcisneros@bestbeginningsalaska.org](mailto:lcisneros@bestbeginningsalaska.org)  
[www.bestbeginningsalaska.org](http://www.bestbeginningsalaska.org)





## Doniece Gott

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**From:** gloria <doris50837@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2017 7:17 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Early Childhood Education is important

Cutting out early childhood education is a big mistake!! I work for a local head start and we not only teach children social emotional skills, physical, cognitive, language, literature and math skills; but we also help the whole family!!! Our program has helped families create goals that help them to become more productive for our community. Many of our families have gone on to work and receive their high school diplomas and even on to community college or university studies. We have provided families with opportunities to learn more about health and nutrition, the importance of fathers in a child's life, how to play with their children and have been their for the families that have members serving our country and many other beneficial topics.

A high quality early childhood education program instills in our children a love to learn. It teaches vital skills to the young that prepares them for their future of learning. Ask any kindergarten teacher and they will tell you that they can tell which children have been part of a quality early childhood education program and those who have not. Early childhood education helps to keep our country competitive in the world; it helps families to get off of government assistance, raises the rate of high school graduation, reduces the number of people sent to prisons and a host of other advantages.

I think one of the best arguments in favor of early childhood education is that it is one of the few programs that actually pay our economy back financially . Here are some excerpts of a study on the cost of early childhood education. <http://equitablegrowth.org/report/the-benefits-and-costs-of-investing-in-early-childhood-education/>

- Research is increasingly demonstrating that investments in education provide significant benefits to children, families, and society as a whole, accelerating economic growth and promoting opportunity over time. This study describes and analyzes the benefits and costs of investing in a public, voluntary, high-quality universal prekindergarten program made available to all 3- and 4-year-olds across the United States. By breaking down these benefits and costs at the state and national levels, we show how such a program would strengthen the U.S. economy's competitiveness while simultaneously easing a host of fiscal, social, and health problems. Over time, the program would more than pay for itself: By 2050, a universal prekindergarten program would yield \$8.90 in benefits for every dollar invested and \$304.7 billion in total benefits. If the ultimate aim of public policy is to promote the well-being of individuals, families, communities, and nations, then investment in early childhood education is clearly an effective strategy.
- A voluntary, high-quality, publicly funded universal prekindergarten education program serving all 3- and 4-year-old children would generate annual benefits that would surpass the annual costs of the program within eight years. In the year 2050, the annual budgetary, earnings, health, and crime benefits would total \$304.7 billion: \$81.6 billion in government budget benefits, \$108.4 billion in increased compensation of workers, and \$114.7 billion in reduced costs to individuals from better health and less crime and child abuse. These annual benefits would exceed the costs of the program in 2050 by a ratio of 8.9 to 1.

**How many programs are there out there that have the ability to pay us back \$8.90 for every \$1.00 spent? Please do not make the mistake of eliminating such a vital program.**

- Thank you for reading the rest of this study and discovering how important early childhood education is for our children, our families, and our country.

Sincerely,  
Gloria Martin  
Fairbanks, Alaska

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