

Operating
Budget Public
Testimony: #3
Early Childhood
Education

Doniece Gott

From: AMY LUJAN <alasbo@gci.net>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 3:16 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Operating Budget Testimony

Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

At the beginning of yesterday's public testimony, Senator Hoffman announced that although K-12 education funding was not included in the proposed budget, a 5% cut was being considered.

My understanding it that this would be a \$60-\$75 million cut to either the Base Student Allocation (BSA), or to the BSA in combination with Pupil Transportation funding. However, it's difficult to comment specifically without the details of the proposed 5% cut. **Once details are provided, I urge you to allow an additional opportunity for testimony.**

The Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO) has long advocated for a revenue-enhanced fiscal plan, which will enable the state to continue to fund essential education services. In recent years, the BSA has not kept pace with inflation, even as school districts are dealing with rapidly rising health insurance costs and other cost pressures. A cut of this size would be short-sighted and it will seriously impact the educational opportunities for our students.

The legislative position statements we've developed in partnership with the Alaska Council of Administrators (ACSA) can be found here: <http://www.alaskaacsa.org/wp-content/uploads/JPS-State-Issues-2017.pdf>

Again, please allow public testimony once the proposed education budget has been announced. Thank you,

Amy Lujan
Executive Director
Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO)
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Doniece Gott

From: deb klein <deblklein@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 2:38 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: support education

Dear Senators,

I've been following the budget proposals from the House, Senate, and Governor and am quite concerned about the situation. I have already given verbal testimony in support of Parents as Teachers as a vital program for new parents and supporting young children. I now want to put in a word for our older children.

I believe it is time for a state income and/or sales tax as a means support medical services, education, infrastructure, and other services that improve Alaskans safety and quality of life. As the federal government plans to reduce spending in departments that specifically enhance Alaska, without state funding or support, our recession will only worsen. Yes, we need to figure out how to cut pork but we don't have enough pork to cut to "save" ourselves. It is time to add revenue as well.

Education funding has been cut repeatedly and it is a vital component of our society. Please support Alaskan children. They are our most important resource.

Thank you,

Deb Klein
PO Box 3575
Seward, AK 99664

PETERSBURG LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: petersburg.lio@akleg.gov
907-772-3741/ phone 907-772-3779/fax

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

YOUR FULL NAME: Marilyn Menish-Meucci

REPRESENTING (ORGANIZATION OR SELF): Self

BILL #: SB22 | **and/or Subject:** Oppose cuts to Operating Budgets

COMMITTEE NAME: Senate Finance

HEARING DATE: March 17, 2017

I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to give my opinion on your proposal for next year's Operating Budgets. Reductions and cuts are not going to get us out of this financial crisis. I feel strongly that before you reduce Programs and Services that are of great benefit and used by many Alaskans, there are other actions you need to take first.

Young families need Pre- Kindergarten and Best Beginnings. Alaskans need Dept. of HSS Programs and Public Health Nursing. Decrease and OTI increment funding for the AK Marine Highway threatens vital transportation where there are no other options for surface travel. A 5% cut to the University of AK Budget and redistribution of Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault funding to AK Trooper Detachments and specific programs will reduce other related services. Cutting the funding for all AK Public Radio and TV Broadcasting will cut a life line for many small villages and towns, especially during emergencies.

You need to listen to all the people of Alaska that are asking you to cut oil and gas tax credits, implement an income tax and use part of the Permanent Fund earnings to fund state services.

Until you show me that you are will to take action on all these remedies, I strongly oppose your Operating Budget proposals.

Thank you for placing my testimony on the written record.

Doniece Gott

From: Michelle Bonham <mnbtthomas@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 5:33 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Headstart/Preschool funding

Hello,

My name is Michelle Bonham, and I live in Nome, Alaska. I am writing in regards to this years fiscal budget planning. I am a minority, Alaskan Native who started my education with the Nome Preschool Association. I have obtained my Bachelors degree in Business Management while living here in Nome. Education is key to growing successful citizens in our communities that contribute and give back.

Please, I am asking for you not to make cuts to early childhood education. My 3 year old daughter Courtney attends the Nome Preschool, the same school I did as a 3 year old. She goes 3 days/week, for 2.5 hours a day and looks forward to it every day. Without it she would not get the critical social skills, and time learning basics before starting kindergarten. Our district already has a hard time with children not meeting State standards, and I think cutting funding to educate our children would be detrimental.

As it stands now, us parents have to do heavy fundraising already just to supplement the monthly tuition we pay. If we lost funding for our teaching staff it would leave children a step back. Please, think of our future generation and find other places to cut.

Michelle Bonham

Nome, Alaska

907-304-4060

Doniece Gott

From: Laura Schneller <scherbel@chugach.net>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 4:33 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: FY 2018 Early Childhood Development Funding

Alaska Finance Committee,

<?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

I am writing to express my concern over funding being eliminated for early childhood development programs, such as Best Beginnings, in the current state budget. I am the parent of a preschool age child in Alaska, and the elimination of funding for Best Beginnings will directly impact my daughter who receives books through the MatSu Imagination Library.

I am very concerned about Alaskan children losing the benefits of early childhood development programs such as Best Beginnings. Developmental education is most effective in young children, and we will never regain these opportunities for Alaska's children, who will grow up to be Alaska's adults.

Please continue to fully fund Best Beginnings and early childhood development programs throughout FY2018.

Thank you,

Laura Schneller

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Doniece Gott

From: Elizabeth Lycan <elycan@smk.bssd.org>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 4:28 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: preschool cuts

I have heard that it is being proposed that preschool funding be cut. I am a preschool teacher through BSSD. I have also worked as a Kindergarten teacher with students who have never had preschool before starting Kindergarten. The difference is this...

- 1-Students are not ready for being in a structured Kindergarten classroom socially or emotionally.
- 2-They do not have the prior experience needed for being a student in an organized classroom setting, so setting them loose without the background creates a chaotic environment for learning.
- 3- Academically they lack the knowledge and understanding that is needed to meet the state standards for Kindergarten education.

Here is what my classroom looked like with children who have had preschool. The children have had at least one year to understand that school a place with structure, expectations, and parents support this part of the child's life. Children learn how to follow directions, walk in a line, listen when an adult is speaking. They are given introductory academics such as letter naming and sound, number naming and one to one correspondence. We teach them to use their words instead of hitting, yelling or screaming. We teach them how to share, use their manners, and respect adults.

Perhaps many years ago these things were taught at home but the "Leave it to Beaver," days are over. Many homes are single parent families, or both parents working. Many families, especially in Bush Alaska are "at-risk" and the numbers are staggering. As political leaders this should be well known!

Here is what a classroom looks like without preschool. My Kindergarten students had never sat longer than 10 to 15 minutes. They came in thinking the classroom was a McDonalds play place. They interrupted me when I spoke, they couldn't sit still, they helped themselves to anything they saw without asking. I have stopped one child from stabbing another in the eye with a pencil. In short, I was not able to teach the state mandated curriculum because I had to teach them how to listen and follow directions. This took the first half of the school year which now created the problem of the students not being ready for 1st grade.

Preschool education is the best way to insure that Alaskan students will succeed because it provides the foundation for future learning. Research has shown this!

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Lycan
ECE/BSSD Teacher

Doniece Gott

From: Linda Conover <conover@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 4:20 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support funding for Early Childhood Programs

My name is Linda Conover. I live in the Mat-Su Valley and am one of the volunteers with the Mat-Su Imagination Library. I am writing in support of Early Childhood Programs, Best Beginnings and the Imagination Libraries around the state. I was a teacher, now retired, I know the importance of early childhood learning.

A child's brain undergoes an amazing period of development from birth to age three - producing 700 new neural connections every second. This means during this time a young child's brain is more open to learning and enriching influences. One form of stimulation that has been proven to make a difference is reading to a child. Because language is fundamental to most of the rest of cognitive development, this simple action - reading - is one of the best ways to make the most of his or her critical brain-building years.

On the negative side, it also means that a young child's brain is more vulnerable to developmental problems should their environment prove especially impoverished or un-nurturing. Some households in Alaska have zero children's books and children are never read to. Best Beginnings supports the Imagination Library in mailing a book each month to children under 5. And it's cheap! About \$2 per month for a \$10-\$15 book - and that includes postage.

Best Beginnings wants parents engaged in their children's learning from birth on.

Best Beginnings wants all Alaskans to understand that investments in early learning pay big dividends to the state as a whole.

Best Beginnings wants to ensure that every Alaskan child has the opportunity to begin school ready to succeed.

I know you are trying to cut the budget, but there is nothing in the budget that will get you more bang for your buck than supporting Best Beginnings - and their support of the Alaskan Imagination Libraries.

According to a statewide survey conducted in September 2015, an overwhelming majority of Alaskans believe state funding for early childhood programs is important for the state's long-term prosperity.

Nearly 75% said that in current tough economic times, they support investment of state funds in early childhood programs as a strategy for ensuring Alaska's long term prosperity.

I want to close with a warm image. Just imagine a child snuggled in it's parent's lap being read to. A warm feeling isn't it. And all we have to do is provide the books each month. So please fund early childhood programs such as Best Beginnings and the Imagination Library.

Thank you,

Linda Conover