

Subject: House Bill 64 for reading proficiency

Dear Representative Drummond and House Education Committee:

Please support House Bill 64 to create a legislative task force for improving reading proficiency statewide. As you know, students in Alaska have scored low in English reading and writing for a long time. Now is the time for the Legislature to take the lead for important changes needed in reading instruction statewide.

I am retired now, but have worked in the Anchorage School District (Special Education and Title 1 School) and volunteered for over 30 years.

Working one on one with kids that have a hard time with reading, which also affect learning or working on academics, there was never enough time in the day to reach each child or the right amount of staff.

It is so very important to keep working with our children, closely when it comes to reading. So many children are just pushed ahead and lost in the system.

Our children want to learn, we just need the time to work with them.

Please look into how we can get our children ahead in reading. It not only benefits our children, but the state of Alaska.

Our children are the future, lets not forget that.

Thank you,

Judy Basler

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26 January 2017

Senator Hughes

Senate Education Committee

Capitol Building

Juneau, Alaska 99801

Representative Drummond

House Education Committee

Capitol Building

Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support fro SB 27 and HB 64: a reading Proficiency Task Force

I am writing in support of SB 27/HB 64, requesting the establishment of a task force on reading proficiency and instruction and the effects of dyslexia on some students.

It is vitally important for dyslexia to be recognized as the extremely prevalent (up to 20%of students) condition that it is. The statistics for the number of students who score proficient or above proficient on standardized tests are among the lowest in the nation. It is no mystery that the foundation of a child's education is laid in the primary years when it is crucial to identify struggling readers and their specific difficulties. We have all heard the saying that from kindergarten to third grade children learn to read and

from then on they read to learn.

When a child's dyslexia is not identified, and tragically, not addressed that child goes on to a painful

school experience. He not only struggles to read, but to do math, and science and social studies. But he often suffers socially as well as his classmates are surely aware of his poor reading skills and poor grades.

By middle school and high school they are unable to take part in honors classes despite their strong intellect because it takes so long to read (and reading is so unpleasant), because each writing assignment

is tantamount to torture and because they may have poor organizational skills. In missing out on those classes they have lost a wonderful learning opportunity and peer group. Similarly the group has lost out on the presence of a person with an awesome, creative dyslexic brain with an incredible capacity to think

outside the box. That child may suffer silently or act out in destructive ways.

Currently, children with dyslexia fall through the cracks in our system. In families with resources parents find tutors and programs to help, but that's the few and that's not fair in a public education. We know where a weak link exists in our educational system and it's in the identification of dyslexia in our students, especially when they are young when we can do the most to help them. Please recognize dyslexia and establish this task force. Thank you to Governor Walker who proclaimed October of 2015 and 2016 Dyslexia Awareness Month in the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Nancy Simpson Martin

IDA Alaska