



3201 C Street, Ste. 110
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 248-7676

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27 February 2020

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Legislature
Capital Building, Rm 128
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HB260 "State Education Policy on Child Development and Adversity"

Dear Representative Tarr:

Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) is writing to express support for House Bill 260. Alaska Children's Trust is the leading organization working to prevent child abuse and neglect in our state.


The landmark Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACEs) expanded our understanding of the critical role of the early childhood years in determining lifelong health and well-being. This study revealed that experiencing trauma (i.e. physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, witnessing domestic violence, or having a parent in jail) impacts a child's life long after the initial event. Children who experience trauma ultimately endure complications in physical, social, and intellectual development.

Through ACES, we also learned that childhood trauma is far more common than previously recognized. Today, 2 out of 3 Alaskan adults have an ACE score of one or more. Alaska currently has one of the highest rates, per capita, of child abuse and neglect in the nation.


During the 30th Alaska Legislative session, ACT supported SB105, which incorporated identical language regarding ACES into the policy of the Department of Health and Social Services. House Bill 260 continues this important work by incorporating this language into the policy of the Department of Education. Trauma informed care and teaching is widely recognized among our educators as an essential component of quality education. A recent survey of NEA-Alaska members and teachers showed the greatest need for professional development was learning more about ACEs and trauma and instruction regarding how to help students who have experienced trauma. The Alaska Education Challenge report released in 2019 also recommended Alaska's schools create a culturally responsive and safe environment that recognizes the need of the whole child, institutes trauma informed practices, and emphasizes building relationships.

We applaud Representative Tarr's work to raise awareness of the necessity of reducing childhood trauma and working to provide all our children with the tools they need to develop resilience. We look forward to continuing to work together to end child maltreatment and foster healthy, thriving communities.

Sincerely,



Trevor J. Storrs
President/CEO



Together we can prevent child abuse and neglect