

## Ella Lubin

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**From:** Makaila da Silva [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 16, 2026 9:29 AM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** House Bill 376

My name is Makaila Kosbruk. My foster daughter was evaluated by Infant Learning at birth and at 6 months old she did not qualify although she would have received great benefit from it.

At 9 months old, she was formally diagnosed with Mild Spastic and Ataxic Cerebral Palsy, which then she finally qualified for ILP. Having access to this resource from birth could have made an even bigger difference in her life.

I strongly believe adjusting the criteria to qualify will not only benefit the children and families of Alaska, but the education system and the state as a whole. It is our job to give every opportunity to our children, the next generation, and to bridge the gap between home and education. Changing the criteria for qualification will ensure no child falls through the cracks.

I hope you will choose to support House Bill 376 and ensure the future of our next generation.

Makaila Kosbruk

**Ella Lubin**

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**From:** Tara Pike [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 16, 2026 8:37 AM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** HB376

My name is Tara Pike, and I am calling in support of House Bill 376. I respectfully urge the committee to support this bill. I am a biological mother, an adoptive mother, and a foster mother who has relied on the Infant Learning Program to support the children in our family.

Through this program, our family received support during critical developmental stages that truly changed the trajectory for our child. Expanding eligibility from a 50% developmental delay to a 25% delay will allow more Alaskan families to access early intervention when it matters most, no matter where they live in our state.

While we understand the budget is tight, investing early in children saves money in the long run.

Nearly half of the children who receive early intervention services will not require higher-cost special education services later in the K-12 system.

A small investment early can change the entire future of a child. Please support HB 376. Thank you for your time

Sent from my iPhone

## Ella Lubin

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**From:** Chelsea Burke [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 13, 2026 11:07 AM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** Testimony on HB 376- Expand Early Intervention Services

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Chelsea Burke. I live in Eagle River. I am the parent of four teenage boys in the Anchorage School District, and my youngest son has a developmental disability. I previously served as a Governor-appointed member of the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and now serve as council staff.

It is important to note that I am a state employee, but I am providing this testimony in my personal capacity as a parent in strong support of HB 376, which expands eligibility for Alaska's Infant Learning Program from a 50% developmental delay to a 25% delay and increases funding to support that expansion.

Currently, Alaska has the most restrictive eligibility criteria in the nation. A two-year-old must be functioning at the level of a one-year-old to qualify for services. HB 376 would align ILP eligibility with the 25% delay standard already used in K-12 special education. There is no evidence-based rationale for continuing to deny services to children who clearly need support but do not meet that extremely high threshold.

My youngest son began receiving early intervention services before age two. At the time, we were living in Delta Junction and utilizing childcare at Fort Greely. Through the Infant Learning Program, he received itinerant services directly in his childcare setting. That flexibility was critical. It allowed both parents to remain in the workforce while ensuring consistency in his therapies, not just at home, but embedded in his preschool environment.

Those early services led to a formal diagnosis and helped streamline his transition from early intervention into preschool special education and then into school-age services.

Today, he is almost 14 years old. He is a Special Olympics athlete and excited to start high school at Chugiak High this fall. Watching him compete today, it is hard to imagine how different his trajectory might have been without early intervention.

He is independent, communicative, and thriving. He still receives special education services and will likely always need some level of support, but his needs have significantly decreased over time. His service ratio has lowered. He requires fewer behavioral interventions and less supervision. He can clearly communicate his wants and needs, which has dramatically reduced frustration and aggression. He also no longer requires therapies outside of school.

I directly attribute that progress to early intervention beginning at age two.

Research supports what families already know: early intervention works. National data shows that 46% of children who receive early intervention meet developmental expectations by kindergarten and do not require special education. Each child who avoids special education represents an estimated savings of \$229,071 over their educational career. Expansion is projected to result in approximately 152 additional children per year who may not require special education services, representing significant long-term savings.

Brain development is most rapid and flexible from birth to age three. Intervention is more effective and less costly when provided early rather than delayed. HB 376 ensures children receive services during that critical developmental window instead of waiting until delays become more severe and more expensive to address.

This bill is a compassionate policy, but it is also a fiscally responsible policy. It strengthens families, supports workforce participation, reduces future reliance on special education and Medicaid, and improves long-term outcomes.

As a parent who has lived this experience, I can say without hesitation: early intervention changes trajectories.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 376 and expand access to the Infant Learning Program for Alaska's youngest children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chelsea Burke

**From:** [Chelsea Burke](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Public Testimony on SB 178 – Expand Early Intervention Services  
**Date:** Friday, February 27, 2026 3:51:55 PM

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Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Chelsea Burke. I live in Eagle River. I am the parent of four school-aged children, and my youngest son has a developmental disability. I previously served as a Governor-appointed member of the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and now serve as council staff.

I am writing in strong support of SB 178, which expands eligibility for Alaska's Infant Learning Program (ILP) from a 50% developmental delay to a 25% delay and increases funding to support that expansion.

Currently, Alaska has the most restrictive eligibility criteria in the nation. A two-year-old must be functioning at the level of a one-year-old to qualify for services. SB 178 would align ILP eligibility with the 25% delay standard already used in K-12 special education. There is no evidence-based rationale for continuing to deny services to children who clearly need support but do not meet that extremely high threshold.

My youngest son began receiving early intervention services at age two. Those services were life-changing for our family. At the time, we were living in Delta Junction and utilizing childcare at Fort Greely. Through ILP, he was able to receive itinerant services directly in his childcare setting. That flexibility was critical. It allowed both parents to remain in the workforce while ensuring consistency in his therapies; not just at home but embedded in his preschool environment.

Those early services led to a formal diagnosis and helped streamline his transition from early intervention into preschool special education and then into school-age services. Today, he is almost 14 years old. He is independent, communicative, and thriving. He still receives special education services and likely always will need some level of support. But his needs have significantly decreased over time. His service ratio has lowered. He requires fewer behavioral interventions. He needs less supervision. He can now communicate his wants and needs, which has dramatically reduced frustration and aggression.

I directly attribute that progress to early intervention beginning at age two.

Research supports what families already know: early intervention works. National data shows that 46% of children who receive early intervention meet developmental expectations by kindergarten and do not require special education. Each child who avoids special education represents an estimated savings of \$229,071 over their educational career. Expansion is projected to result in 152 additional children per year who may not require special education services, representing significant long-term savings.

Brain development is most rapid and flexible from birth to age three. Intervention is more effective and less costly when provided early rather than delayed. SB 178 ensures children receive services during that critical developmental window instead of waiting until delays become more severe and more expensive to address.

This bill is not just compassionate policy, it is fiscally responsible policy. It strengthens families, supports workforce participation, reduces future reliance on special education and Medicaid, and improves long-term outcomes.

As a parent who has lived this experience, I can say without hesitation: early intervention changes trajectories.

I respectfully urge you to support SB 178 and expand access to the Infant Learning Program for Alaska's youngest children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Chelsea Burke



## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Sharon Franklin <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 2:34 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 178

My name is Sharon Franklin and I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention, and I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.

I am a Developmental Disability Resource Connection Specialist who provides services in Fairbanks, Alaska. I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my community/family. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

We know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that in addition to being the right thing to do, investments in early interventions in SB178 promise to result in 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska.

Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178. The others are far more personal and powerful and don't fit in my allotted time.

In closing, please support SB178, thank you.

Sincerely,  
Sharon Franklin

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Calista A. Elzey <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 2:28 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support for Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention

My name is Calista Elzey and I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention - and I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.

I am a licensed social worker and developmental therapist who provides early intervention services in Fairbanks. I have seen the positive impact early intervention has had on my community and the families I serve. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families who would benefit from early intervention. Investments in early interventions in SB178 promise to result in a 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska.

Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178. I have personally seen how early intervention can significantly benefit the lives of children and their caregivers by supporting their relationships, confidence, and access to community resources.

In closing, please support SB178,

Thank you.



**Calista Elzey, LMSW**

**Developmental Therapist**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Fairbanks AK 99701

[www.alaskacenter.org](http://www.alaskacenter.org)

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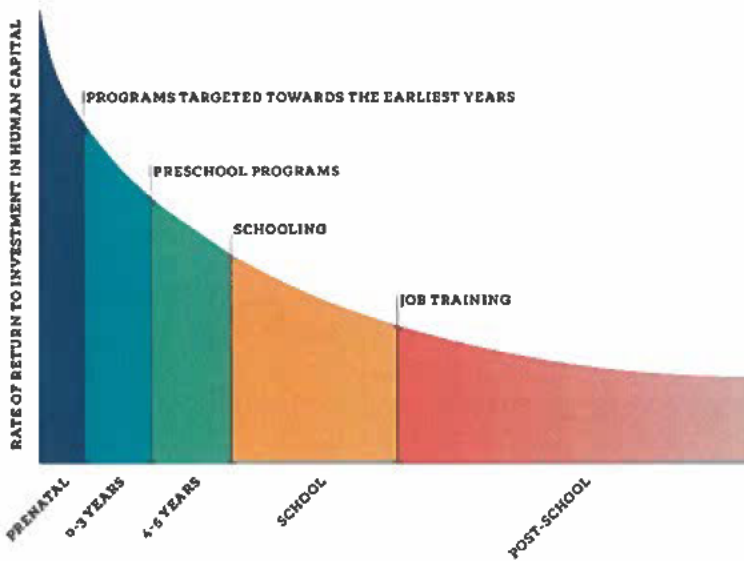
**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Jessica Mills Clark <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 12:57 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support ILP in the state budget: SB178

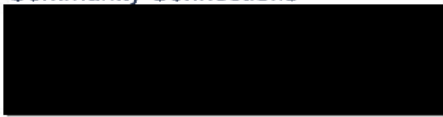
My name is Jessica Mills Clark and I'm writing in support of increasing the FY 27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. Thank you for including this increment in FY 26, please take that same step again.

I am an educator and family service coordinator who provides services in Ketchikan. I have seen the positive impact early intervention has had in my community and our surrounding areas. Expanding the ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delays help more Alaskan families and saves the state money, as demonstrated by the Heckman Curve (below). Investing early in children yields the greatest returns. The Heckman Curve demonstrates that the highest economic and social benefits come from early skill development. This investment leads to lifelong success, increased productivity, and reduced societal costs. The Heckman Curve was developed by an economist, not by an early intervention provider.



*Sincerely,*

*Jessica Mills Clark, M.Ed., IMH-E®*  
Early Childhood Special Educator  
Early Learning Program  
Community Connections



## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Michele Girault <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 9:04 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB178

To: Alaska State Senate Finance Committee

From: Michele Girault Executive Director Hope Community Resources and Board President Key Coalition of Alaska

Subject- SB178

I am writing in full support of expanded early intervention services. This initiative is one of the top priorities for the Key Coalition of Alaska. We were very grateful for the bipartisan support of this initiative last session and hope to see that continue this session.

There is clear data that investing in our children at the earliest stages of need provides critical support to both child and family and reduces cost to the state as the child matures. The infant learning programs across the state have been a lifeline for many families and have consistently demonstrated success.

I strongly urge you to include this increment into the budget again this session, enabling our skilled ILP teams across the state to expand their critical impact.

Thank you!

Alaskans share a Vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our Vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future.

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**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Tesia Meade <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 9:02 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support SB 178

Hi,

I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention - and I urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. We know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that - in addition to being the right thing to do - investments in the early interventions in SB178 promise to result in a 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska. Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early interventions in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178. The others are far more personal and powerful. Please support SB178.

Thanks,  
Tesia Meade  
99801

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Cathy Bolling <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 9:27 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support for SB 178: 30 years of gratitude

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Good morning Senate Finance Committee members, Senators Hoffman, Olsen, Stedman, Kiehl, Merrick, Kaufman and Cronk:

I am writing to urge your support of **Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention**. I write to you today from personal experience as the grateful parent of a child who received these services almost 30 years ago, right in our home in Craig.

We were so excited to welcome our first child and proudly announced, "She's above average." But at around 18 months we noticed, or rather it was brought to our attention, she was not responding to her name or making eye contact as would be expected. At first we denied that anything could be wrong with our "Above average" daughter but as we observed her more closely, our denial turned into fear and then desperation. At the recommendation of our local providers, we took her to Anchorage for a multi-disciplinary assessment. The diagnosis: somewhere on the autism spectrum, but at 2-and-a-half years old, too early to say where. The doctor recommended early intervention.

We considered whether we needed to move for services. But fortunately, through Community Connections, we had an early learning specialist come into our home with her bag of toys, to attempt to engage our daughter and meet her where she was at. I would watch the two of them, my daughter initially moving away and the specialist, gently following her and trying to engage, not always with words, but in the skilled techniques she knew and I did not.

In time, she engaged that little girl. And it made this mother's heart happy. It was the first step in a long road that brings us to today, as that little girl is nearing 30 years old and is a thriving, working, traveling, compassionate, engaged member of society, here in Southeast.

That ELP specialist did a lot for my daughter, but she did a lot for me as well. She modeled for me what I needed to do to reach my daughter and help her link in with the world around her. The specialist left me notes each week that I could refer to. She answered my questions. She was the model I needed.

And so I urge you to support SB 178 bill, which helps not only children with developmental delays/disabilities, but the parents who find themselves at a loss when the usual early parenting skills fail to work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cathy Bolling  
Craig, Alaska

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Cheryl Welcome <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 11:58 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support for SB178 -safe-

My name is Cheryl Welcome and I'm calling in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention - and I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.

I am a Developmental Specialist and Manager who provides services in the Mat Su. I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my community, the children, and families we serve, as well as the impact of turning families and children away who don't meet the high criteria, only to return later with increased delays. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

We know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that in addition to being the right thing to do, investments in early interventions in SB178 promise to result in 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska.

Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178. The others are far more personal and powerful and don't fit in my allotted time.

In closing, please support SB178, thank you.

Thank you,

Cheryl Welcome  
ILP Developmental Specialist Manager  
M.Ed. IMH-E® Infant Family Specialist, Endorsed Reflective Supervisor  
DIR Floortime Certified

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Kristin Bradshaw  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 12:54 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support For Senate Bill 178

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is \_\_Kristin Bradshaw\_ and I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178 and increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. I was happy to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and ask you to take that same step again.

I am an occupational therapist who provides early intervention services in Fairbanks. In my role, I have the impact early intervention has had on my home community. Over my 29 year career in early intervention I have seen many advances in medical interventions, evaluations, intervention strategies to best support our youngest and most vulnerable. One thing that has needed to change to meet best practices and provide support earlier is to change our qualification criteria to a 25 percent delay. How many more first steps, words, hugs, bites, etc could we support and witness if we opened up services to capture the children who are delayed but currently not eligible?

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please support Senate Bill 178 and maintain this commitment in the FY27 budget.

Sincerely,  
Kristin Bradshaw

[REDACTED] Fairbanks, AK 99709-2930 [REDACTED]

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** D. McGinnis, DNP, APRN, FNP-C [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 1:13 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB178

Honorable Senators,

I am a family nurse practitioner from the Northwest Arctic Borough. I work for Maniilaq but am testifying for myself in support of SB178 to expand Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions. I work in the villages surrounding Kotzebue. I often see young children that I suspect have needs for early education that I am then informed they do not qualify. I have been working in Alaska for 3 years now, so I am seeing those children start to struggle as they get older.

We have a saying in medicine that "Prevention is better than cure," emphasizing that taking proactive steps to maintain health—such as through lifestyle choices and vaccinations—is more effective and beneficial than treating diseases after they occur.

Please take the next step to help not just the rural children but ALL children to get a good start in life as they are the FUTURE of Alaska.

Thank you,  
Diane

D. McGinnis, DNP, APRN, FNP-C

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Mary Beck <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 1:48 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support for SB178 – Expand Early Intervention Services

Dear Senate Finance Committee Members,

My name is Mary Beck, and I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 178 to expand eligibility for early intervention services under Alaska's Infant Learning Program (ILP).

My son is non-verbal and on the autism spectrum. He participated in the ILP program, and I can say with certainty that he would not be where he is today — or as successful as he is — without those early intervention services.

Through ILP, our family received critical support during some of the most challenging and uncertain moments of our lives. The providers didn't just work with my son — they empowered me as a parent. They taught me how to better communicate with him, support his development, and build the foundational skills he needed to grow and succeed.

Early intervention truly changed the trajectory of his life. Because of ILP, he entered school more prepared, with stronger communication skills and greater independence than he would have had otherwise. The progress he has made is a direct result of those early services.

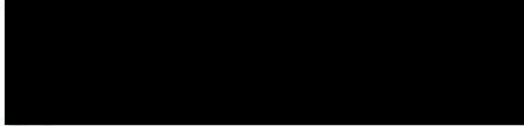
Expanding eligibility through SB178 is not only the right thing to do for families — it is a smart investment in Alaska's future. No family should miss out on life-changing early intervention services because they fall just outside current eligibility criteria.

Please support SB178 and help ensure more Alaska children receive the early support they need to reach their fullest potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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**Mary Beck**  
**LINKS Resource Center, Parent Advocate**



[linksprc.org](https://linksprc.org)

**LINKS provides resources, advocacy, and connections to improve lives.**



**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Stephen Morse  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 11:41 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support For Senate Bill 178

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Stephen Morse and I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178 and increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. I was happy to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and ask you to take that same step again.

I am a an SLP] who provides speech services in Sitka. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community.

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please support Senate Bill 178 and maintain this commitment in the FY27 budget.

Sincerely,  
Stephen Morse

[REDACTED] Sitka, AK 99835-7131  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] 4

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Santanna Sumauang <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 9:31 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Please Support SB178

Hello, my name is Santanna Sumauang and I am emailing you today in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand eligibility for Early Intervention. I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.

I am a developmental specialist and speech language pathologist assistant and provide early intervention services in Sitka, AK. In my role, I have seen the profound impact early intervention has had on my home community. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

We know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that - in addition to being the right thing to do - investments in the early interventions in SB178 promise to result in a 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska.

Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early interventions in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178.

Beyond cost savings, early intervention helps children and families thrive during birth-3 years old, some of the most important and formative years of a child's life. The support families receive from early intervention services are skills they are able to carry throughout their child's entire life.

Thank you for your time and consideration in SB178.

Sincerely,

Santanna Sumauang, BA, SLP-A  
Early Learning Program  
Developmental Specialist/ Family Service Coordinator

Center for Community  
[REDACTED]

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Suriyani Raip <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 9:30 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB 178

My name is Suriyani Raip and I'm sending this email in support of Senate Bill 178. Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention - and I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.

I am a Case Manager who **provides/receives** services in **Unalaska / Dutch Harbor**. I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my **community/family**. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. We know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that in addition to being the right thing to do, investments in early interventions in SB178 promise to result in 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska.

Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178. The others are far more personal and powerful and don't fit in my allotted time.

In closing, please support SB178, thank you.



*Suriyani Raip*

Iliuliuk Family & Health Services, Inc.

[REDACTED]

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## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Erika Apathy <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 9:27 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support for the Infant Learning Program

Hello,

My name is Erika Apathy and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 178 to expand eligibility for early intervention. I respectfully urge the committee to support this bill, which expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions.

I am a parent who has received services in Sitka from the Early Learning Program with Center for Community. They are an amazing group that have helped my family immensely.

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves state money in the long run when more children are "caught" before they enter the public school system. So much development (90%) happens before the age of 6, that catching and addressing any delays is so crucial to our education system and our public services later in life. The data shows how much money is saved in the long run when you invest in these early childhood programs at the start of their lives.

I know the budget is tight, so I know this is a tough decision. I hope that the committee can look into the future and see the 400% return on investment the State of Alaska can get by investing in early intervention through SB178. Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive early intervention will not need higher cost special education services when they get to the K-12 school system.

Thank you for your time, and please support SB178!

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Erika Apathy  
Bachelor's of Arts in Elementary Education  
Master's in Educational Technology  
[REDACTED]

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Lydia Nelson <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 9:23 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Senate bill 178

*My name is Lydia Nelson and I'm calling in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention - and I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.*

*I am a mom who receives services for my son. I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my son. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. My son will soon not be eligible at 50% delay but isn't at all caught up. He needs these services.*

*We know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that in addition to being the right thing to do, investments in early interventions in SB178 promise to result in 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska.*

*Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178. The others are far more personal and powerful and don't fit in my allotted time.*

*Thank you*

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Carrie Nash <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 9:12 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support for Senate Bill 178 -Funding for Infant Learning Program

To the members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am writing to ask your support for Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention. I have two children who were enrolled in the Infant Learning Program many years ago. The support and therapies they received made a huge difference in their lives and in our family's life. We learned terminology, solid and practical information and were sustained at a difficult time in our lives.

I am now the Board President at ACCA in Fairbanks. Our intervention specialists, early childhood educators and therapists serve a huge area of Northern and Interior Alaska. We know that nearly half of the children we serve between birth and age 3 will not need to be enrolled in Special Education in public schools as they will graduate from the need for services. We know that state investments in the Infant Learning Program at the beginning of kids' lives promise a 400% return for Alaska's budget.

Families are sustained and successful.

By expanding the eligibility for Alaskan kids from 25% disabled rating to 50% disabled rating we will be able to serve all of the Alaskan kids who really need our help. It also puts us in line with eligibility guidelines in most of the other states.

Parents are the best teachers for their young children with disabilities and developmental delays.

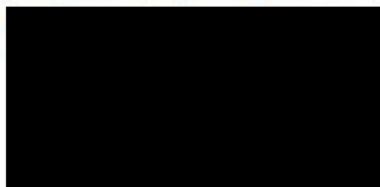
Please pass Senate Bill 178 for our kids and families.

Thank you,

Carrie Nash, Fairbanks

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Carrie Nash



Fairbanks, AK 99709

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Angie Gingue <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 9:00 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support for SB178

My name is **Angie Gingue** and I'm emailing in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention - and I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.

I am the Infant Learning Program Coordinator for ACCA, who provides services in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, Delta Junction/Ft. Greely, Copper River, and North Slope regions. I was also born and raised in Alaska and have seen the impact early intervention has had on my own family, as well as my community throughout my life. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. Data also shows that almost half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools.

In closing, please support SB178, thank you.



**Angie Gingue, M.Ed. ECSE Assistant Director  
Infant Learning Program Coordinator**

[REDACTED] Fairbanks AK 99701 Phone: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[www.alaskacenter.org](http://www.alaskacenter.org)

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**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Brittni Haan <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 8:54 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB178

My name is Brittni Haan and I respectfully urge the committee to support SB178. Expanding ILP eligibility to a 25% delay results in a 400% return on investment for Alaska, as nearly half of these children will not need higher-cost special education services later in K-12. Small investments upstream help children, families, and the state budget. Please support SB178. This program has been crucial in supporting the needs of our youngest community members in our region and linking them with the supports and resources to nourish their growth and development. Starting these interventions early prevent so many future supports that may be needed actively decreasing the cost for the State overall.

**Brittni Haan, BSN, RN**  
Public Health Nurse III  
Maniilaq Association Public Health  
[REDACTED]

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Lauren Wild <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 8:52 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB 178 Support

Hello,

My name is Lauren Wild and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 178 to expand eligibility for early intervention. I respectfully urge the committee to support his bill, which expands Alaska's infant learning program early interventions.

I am a parent who has received services in Sitka from the Early Learning Program with Center for Community. They are an amazing group that have helped my family immensely.

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves state money in the long run when more children are "caught" before they enter the public school system. So much development (90%) happens before the age of 6, that catching and addressing any delays is so crucial to our education system and our public services later in life. The data shows how much money is saved in the long run when you invest in these early childhood programs at the start of their lives.

I know the budget is tight, so I know this is a tough decision. I hope that the committee can look into the future and see the 400% return on investment the State of Alaska can get by investing in early intervention through SB178. Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive early intervention will not need higher cost special education services when they get to the K-12 school system.

Thank you for your time, and please support SB178!

- Lauren Wild

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Lauren Wild, PhD

Assistant Professor - Applied Fisheries  
Research Biologist - Marine Mammalogy  
University of Alaska Southeast Sitka Campus

Sitka, Alaska  
[REDACTED]

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Fontana Dawson <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 8:42 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** I Support Senate Bill 178

Good Morning,

*My name is **Fontana** and I'm reaching out in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention - and I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.*

*I am a parent of twins who **received** services in **Fairbanks**. I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my **family**. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. One of my twin's "B" was one of the children that unfortunately fell below the 50% delay. For the first year of his life, he received ILP services and made huge gains. At his one-year evaluation he was at a 35% delay and no longer qualified for services. Over the next year we watched as his twin brother "O" continued to make gains developing communication and motor skills supported through ILP. At close to their 2nd birthday "B" had made very limit progress in language and communication. I made the decision for a reevaluation. At the reevaluation he was evaluated as a 24-month child because he was 24 months and 15 days, if he had been evaluated the next day he would have been evaluated as a 25-month-old, and not met the threshold for a 50% delay. Therefore, he would not qualify for services. I firmly believe the lapse in being eligible in services directly impacted him. "O" continued services from birth until he graduated from ILP at 2 years and 9 months. "B" was eligible for school services, which would be a longer-term cost to the state. I have an older child "J" who did not qualify for ILP services due to "not enough of a delay," he was eligible and used 4 years of school-based Speech services. This took away from his academic time, that could have been supported earlier in life when the brain grows and develops quickly.*

*We know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that in addition to being the right thing to do, investments in early interventions in SB178 promise to result in 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska.*

*Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget. But cost savings are only one of the many reasons to support SB178. The others are far more personal and powerful.*

*In closing, please support SB178, thank you.*

*Fontana Dawson*

*Fairbanks, Alaska 99709*

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Rita Short <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 8:28 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Testify for Continued Support of SB178 (Infant Learning Program)

Dear Committee Members,

My name is [NAME], and I respectfully urge you to support SB178.

Expanding eligibility for Alaska's Infant Learning Program (ILP) to include children with a 25% developmental delay is a practical, fiscally responsible step that will make a measurable difference for children and families across our state. Early identification and intervention during the first three years of life—when brain development is most rapid—can significantly alter a child's long-term educational trajectory.

Data show that expanding ILP eligibility to a 25% delay yields an estimated 400% return on investment for Alaska. Nearly half of the children who would qualify under this threshold are expected to avoid needing higher-cost special education services later in K–12. In other words, modest investments in early intervention reduce future strain on school districts, improve educational outcomes, and strengthen long-term workforce readiness.

For families, early intervention is more than a cost-saving strategy—it provides reassurance, tools, and professional guidance during a critical developmental window. It empowers parents to support their child's communication, motor, cognitive, and social-emotional growth before delays widen into larger academic gaps. In many cases, timely support means children enter kindergarten ready to learn alongside their peers.

For the state, SB178 represents sound public policy. Small, strategic investments upstream prevent significantly higher expenditures downstream. By expanding ILP eligibility, Alaska can reduce long-term special education costs, support stronger student outcomes, and build a more resilient education system overall.

This is a common-sense measure that supports children, families, school districts, and the state budget simultaneously. I respectfully ask you to vote in favor of SB178 and prioritize early intervention for Alaska's youngest residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rita Short  
Kotzebue, AK  
[REDACTED]

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Marlene or John Wenger [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 7:26 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB178

Hello  
I am writing as a member of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. I am in total support of Senate Bill 178 to expand eligibility for early intervention in the Infant Learning Program. I'm aware that the legislature supported this expansion last year, and I strongly urge you to maintain that commitment in the FY27 budget.

Thank You  
Marlene Wenger

March 3, 2026

**Subject:** Parent Support for SB 178 – EXPAND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Dear Member of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Myrna Johannsen, a parent from Ketchikan, and I am writing to express my strong support for SB 178 – Expand Early Intervention Services, which you will be considering on March 4, 2026.

By now you have seen the math and heard the science behind what a more robust early intervention services program can do for Alaska's babies ages 0–3. You have undoubtedly been told where Alaska sits in comparison to other states and the results they have achieved.

What I would like to do is give you a picture of this program's true impact — a name, a face, a family, and a reason.

**Baby Chuck Norrisa.**

Tiny and Alaskan tough. She was born 7.5 weeks premature and required significant medical intervention. She was also a child who received Early Intervention Services. The teachers providing services came directly to our home for evaluations and lessons. They taught me how to help her catch up with her peers using everyday items we already had in our home, and they gave me a vast amount of knowledge about how to help her communicate, eat, and develop motor skills.

Baby Chuck Norrisa had a 75% developmental delay. With Early Intervention Services, I taught her to say “help,” to point, to use a fork and spoon (sometimes), and to develop the play skills that form the foundation for everything else in life.

When Baby Chuck Norrisa was 1.5 years old, I was placed on bed rest (couch rest) during my pregnancy because medical experts determined she had set a precedent for being born too early. The Early Intervention Services program adapted immediately to support our family. Every teaching strategy was adjusted so that I could continue helping my daughter while protecting my pregnancy.

Miss Wyatt was born 3.5 weeks early — and cute as a button. She also received Early Intervention Services for communication and motor development.

As we know, history tends to repeat itself. When Miss Wyatt was 1.5 years old, I was again placed on couch rest during my pregnancy with Miss Henry. Once again, the Early Intervention teachers adapted everything to fit my family's needs.

Miss Henry was born only 1.5 weeks early, and she too received Early Intervention Services.

Your support for SB 178 holds the power to heal Alaska's babies. Without the support and services my family received during those very difficult days of trying to help our children learn to crawl, eat, and talk, my children would have been left far behind their peers.

I know firsthand how important these services are for families navigating developmental challenges. From the perspective of a busy and growing family, this program can transform a child and a whole household from simply surviving to truly thriving.

I respectfully urge you to support SB 178 – Expand Early Intervention Services.

Thank you for your time and for your service to Alaska's families.

Sincerely,

**Myrna Johannsen**

Mother of Baby Chuck Norrisa

Mother of Miss Wyatt

Mother of Miss Henry

Ketchikan, Alaska



Photo of Charlie (Baby Chuck) Norrisa

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** [REDACTED] behalf of Alina Krol  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2026 3:10 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Support For Senate Bill 178

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Alina Krol and I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178 and increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. I was happy to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and ask you to take that same step again.

I am a Social Worker who provides in Fairbanks, Alaska. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community.

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please support Senate Bill 178 and maintain this commitment in the FY27 budget.

Sincerely,  
Alina Krol

[REDACTED] Fairbanks, AK 99712-1150 [REDACTED]

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Barbara Morse <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 10:01 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** In support of Senate bill 178

Dear Senate Finance committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 178 to expand eligibility for early intervention. I respectfully urge the committee to support this bill, which expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions.

As a person who has worked in children's programs for many years in Sitka and seeing many amazing changes I can honestly say there is nothing that rivals the impact of early intervention on our children who are the future of our state. So please do the right thing and pass Senate bill 178.

Respectfully,

Barbara Morse

[REDACTED]  
Sister Alaska 99835

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Kathe Baker [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 10:33 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** ILP advancement

My name is Katharine Weber-Baker and I was very pleased to see the funds, 5.72 million, allocated for the Infant Learning Program for 2026 and I implore you to do the same for the FY27 budget. I have a granddaughter who has Autism. She is in her early 20's now and a working, community involved young lady due to very early interventions when she was a toddler and diagnosed. Everything that could be utilized in town through non-profit programs as well as private pay options was available to her and this strong, consistent, professional exposure provided a path for her to thrive. As a retired elementary teacher, I can attest to the tremendous growth of children with disabilities and delays who have been fortunate to receive specialized, focused instruction tailored to individual needs in Elementary school. So going even earlier with interventions, the Early Infant Learning program allows for even more success, supporting growing children at the earliest possible level before they reach school age. **Reaching infants with a 25% developmental delay instead of a 50% delay is vital to early growth and development and it benefits even more of these impacted children to lead productive lives, here in Alaska.**

Thank you for reading this and for your serious consideration to make Alaska a better place for raising and protecting children.

Most Sincerely,  
Katharine Weber-Baker

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Lawrence Baker [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 10:42 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee

My name is Lawrence J Baker and I was pleased to see the funds, 5.72 million, allocated for the Infant Learning Program for 2026. Please do the same for the FY27 budget. We have a granddaughter who has Autism. She is in her early 20's now and a working, community involved young lady due to very early interventions when she was a toddler and diagnosed. Everything that could be utilized in town through non-profit programs as well as private pay options was available to her and this strong, consistent, professional exposure provided a path for her to thrive. So going even earlier with interventions, the Early Infant Learning program allows for even more success, supporting growing children at the earliest possible level before they reach school age. **Reaching infants with a 25% developmental delay instead of a 50% delay is vital to early growth and development and it benefits even more of these impacted children to lead productive lives, here in Alaska.**

Thank you for your serious consideration to make Alaska a better place for raising and protecting children.

Sincerely,

Lawrence J Baker

[REDACTED]

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Lawrence Baker

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 7:12 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB 178

My name is Kristen Spencer and I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178. SB178 expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program by lowering the eligibility threshold from a 50% delay to 25%, allowing more children to receive early intervention when it is most effective.

I am the parent of a child who has a disability. I am also a board member of REACH Inc. in Juneau. I have seen firsthand the impact early intervention has on families. This change will help more Alaskan children while also saving the state money long-term.

Investing in early intervention yields a strong return—up to 400%—and reduces the need for costly special education later. These savings matter, but the true impact is on children and families who benefit from early support.

Please support SB178. Thank you.

Kristen Spencer

[REDACTED]  
Juneau AK 99801

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 5:28 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SB178 support

Good afternoon,

My name is Tom Hiratsuka and I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 178: Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention. I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 178 as it expands Alaska's Infant Learning Program early interventions, which helps parents become the best teacher for their children with developmental delays or disabilities.

I am the CFO of Hope Community Resources, and I have seen the impact early intervention has had on our community. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% developmental delay to 25% delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. I know the budget is tight. That's why it's important to recognize that in addition to being the right thing to do, investments in early interventions in SB178 promise to result in a 400% return on investment for the State of Alaska. Data shows that nearly half of the children who receive the early intervention in SB178 will not need higher cost special education services when they get to K-12 schools. Small investments upstream can help children, families, and the state budget.

Thank you for your consideration!

Tom

Alaskans share a Vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our Vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future.

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ALASKA  
MENTAL HEALTH BOARD  
ADVISORY BOARD ON  
ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE

431 N. FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 203  
JUNEAU, AK 99801  
907-465-8920 Fax 907-465-4410  
Kermit E. Wilson, Executive Director

February 12, 2026

Senate Health & Social Services Committee  
State Capitol Building  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: SB 178 – Expand Early Intervention Service

Dear Committee Members,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are statutorily charged with advising, planning, educating, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska. The Boards are also tasked with evaluating federal and state laws concerning mental health, alcohol, and other drug and substance misuse prevention and treatment services (A.S. 47.30.661, A.S. 44.29.100).

SB 178 will expand access to Alaska's Infant Learning Program, including early intervention, healthcare, and therapy services to children who experience developmental delays, thus reducing the need for more intensive and costly care later. This bill lowers the eligibility criteria for children from 50 percent to 25 percent.

AMHB-ABADA supports the passage of SB 178, believing that early recognition and intervention is critical to addressing complex behavior needs before they become acute and more costly.

Thank you for introducing this legislation.

Sincerely,

Bobby Dorton, Chair  
Advisory Board on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse

Tonie Protzman, LPC, Chair  
Alaska Mental Health Board

Kermit Wilson, Executive Director



July 31, 2025

Subject: Request to Overturn Governor's Veto of Infant Learning Program Funds

Honorable Members of the Alaska Legislature:

The Key Coalition of Alaska is deeply committed to the healthy development and long-term success of Alaska's youngest citizens, and we are very grateful to both the Senate and the House for supporting an infusion of critical funds for Alaska's Infant Learning Programs. As you know, this investment in our children will not only enhance growth and development but also save the state money. The Governor's recent line-item veto of the enhanced funding for the Infant Learning Program was disappointing and short-sighted. We are writing to urge you to support and vote for the reinstatement of these essential funds during the upcoming session.

The Infant Learning Program provides early intervention services—such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and developmental screenings—to infants and toddlers at risk for delays. Research continually demonstrates that:

Early neural pathways are most malleable between birth and age three, making timely intervention both effective and efficient.

Children receiving early support are more likely to succeed in kindergarten, reducing future special education costs by up to 30%.

Families gain the tools and confidence to foster healthy learning environments, promoting stronger communities across Alaska's urban and rural regions.

By overturning the veto, you help to assure Alaska families can access the support they need at critical developmental markers.

We respectfully ask you to:

1. Vote to override the Governor's veto of the Infant Learning Program line item.
2. Continue to champion bipartisan support for stable, long-term investment in early childhood services.

Sincerely,

Michele Girault  
Key Coalition of Alaska Board President

3705 Arctic Blvd #1866  
Anchorage, AK 99503-5774  
[www.keycoalitionofalaska.com](http://www.keycoalitionofalaska.com)  
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