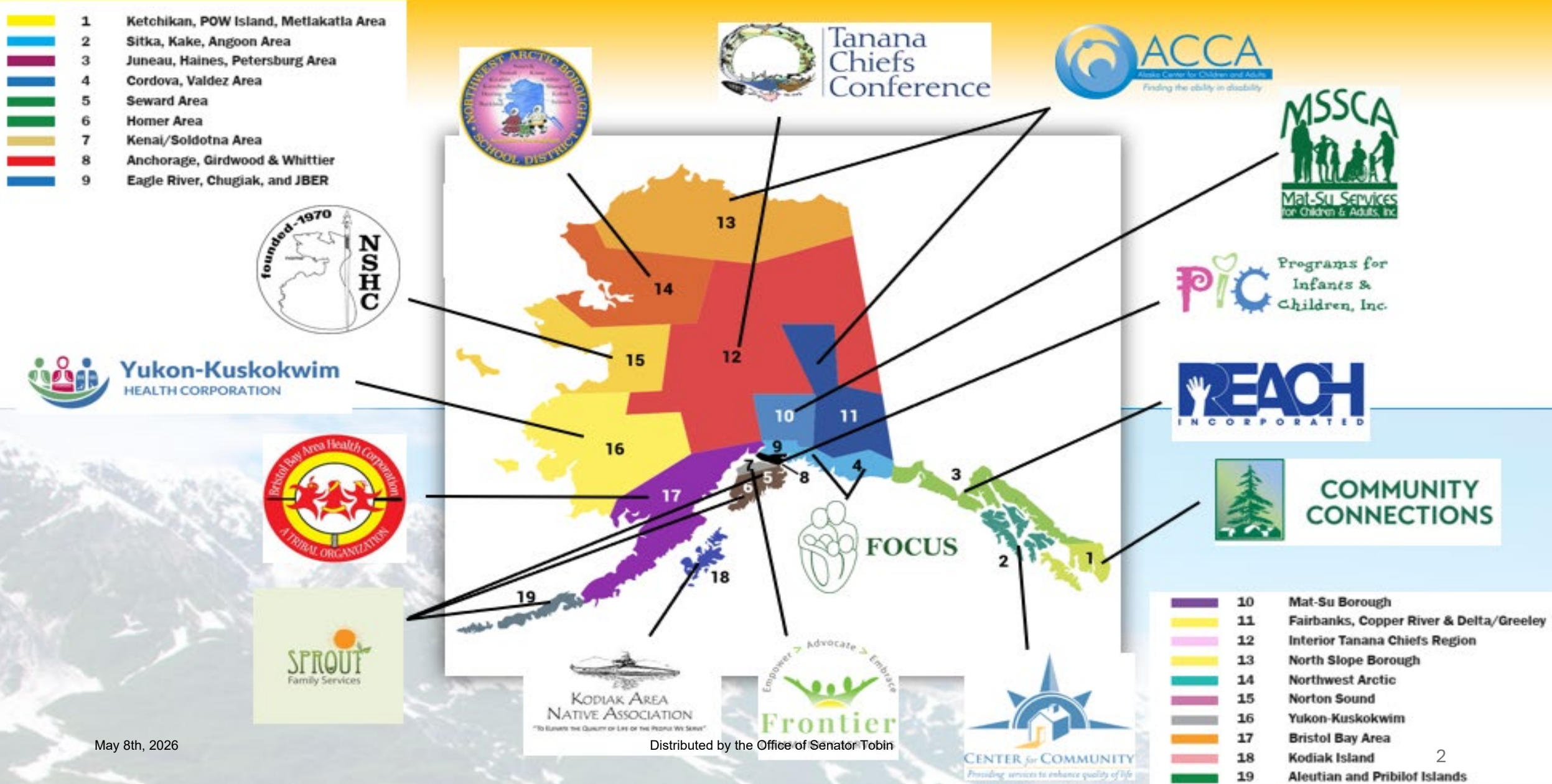


# Expanded Eligibility for Alaska's Infant Learning Program (IDEA Part C)

**Leveraging the Power of Early Intervention Services  
and Ensuring Equitable Access**

# AK ILP Network



# ILP in Alaska



- Kids/Families
- 1900 enrolled annually
  - Autism
  - Premature births
  - Complex medical needs
  - Developmental delays-Motor, cognition, communication, social/emotion, self help
- Services:
  - Referral-Evaluation-Eligibility-IFSP development-**Services!**
    - Occupational Therapy
    - Physical Therapy
    - Speech Therapy
    - Special Instruction
    - Social Work
    - Service coordination
- Natural Environments-Home visits
- Coaching
- Never a waitlist!

# Infant Learning Providers in Alaska

- Developmental Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Physical Therapists
- Teacher of the Visually Impaired
- Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Social Workers
- Infant Mental Health Specialists
- Autism Specialists
- Infant Massage Specialists



All providers obtain a Part C Credential and therapists hold State licensure

May 8th, 2026

Distributed by the Office of Senator Tobin

# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IDEA Part C=Infant Learning Program in AK

- Mandated services for children 0-3 who experience developmental delays or disabilities during the most critical period of brain development.
- Jointly funded by State and Feds
- Services provided at no cost to families
- ILP is voluntary! Parents choose to:
  - Evaluate
  - Enroll
  - Service to receive
- Parents are valued members of the team and are involved in all decisions and interventions.

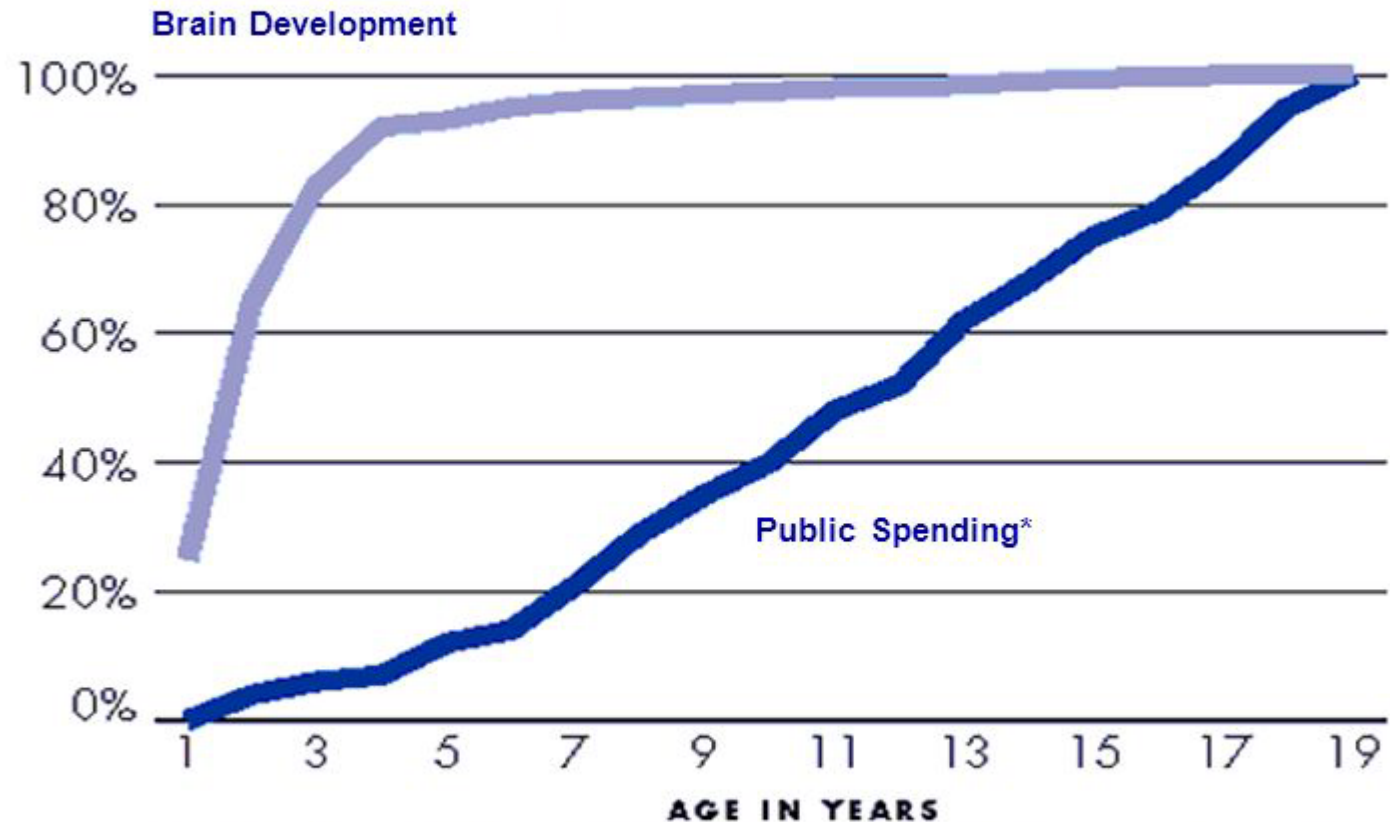
# Invest Earlier

Almost 90% of brain development happens by age 3.

Children who don't receive ILP services, may not be identified until Kindergarten.

**Earlier services can lead to much greater impact!**

## PUBLIC SPENDING & BRAIN DEVELOPMENT THE DISCONNECT



\* Portion of total public investment in children being spent during indicated year in children's lives.

Source: The RAND Corporation  
Distributed by the Office of Senator Tobin

# The work that led us here

## 2022 Report sponsored by Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

- Interagency Coordinating Council-Finance Subcommittee explored eligibility criteria and funding of Part C across the nation
- The resulting report listed recommendations to expand eligibility and improve the funding systems for AK ILP.

## Recommendations

- Align Part C criteria with Part B (25% delay in one domain of development or 20% in two) and update the list of qualifying conditions accordingly.
- Make supporting changes to the Medicaid statute
  - add new ILP provider type and reimburse for all ILP services
  - allow the IFSP as an authorizing document for Medicaid coverage



# Why Expand Eligibility?

Alaska has the most restrictive eligibility criteria for early intervention services in the nation.

Only two other states require a 50% developmental delay.  
Alaska Part B (K-12 special education) uses a 25% threshold.

The difference results in delayed onset of services for children with 25-49% delay.

Often-cited studies by James Heckman have shown high return on investment for early intervention: ***For every \$1 invested, up to \$17 saved.***

46% of children that receive early intervention don't require special education by the time they get to Kindergarten, which represents annual savings up to \$34.9M. **NEILS\***

Early intervention improves long-term outcomes for children, families, and the state.

\*National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study

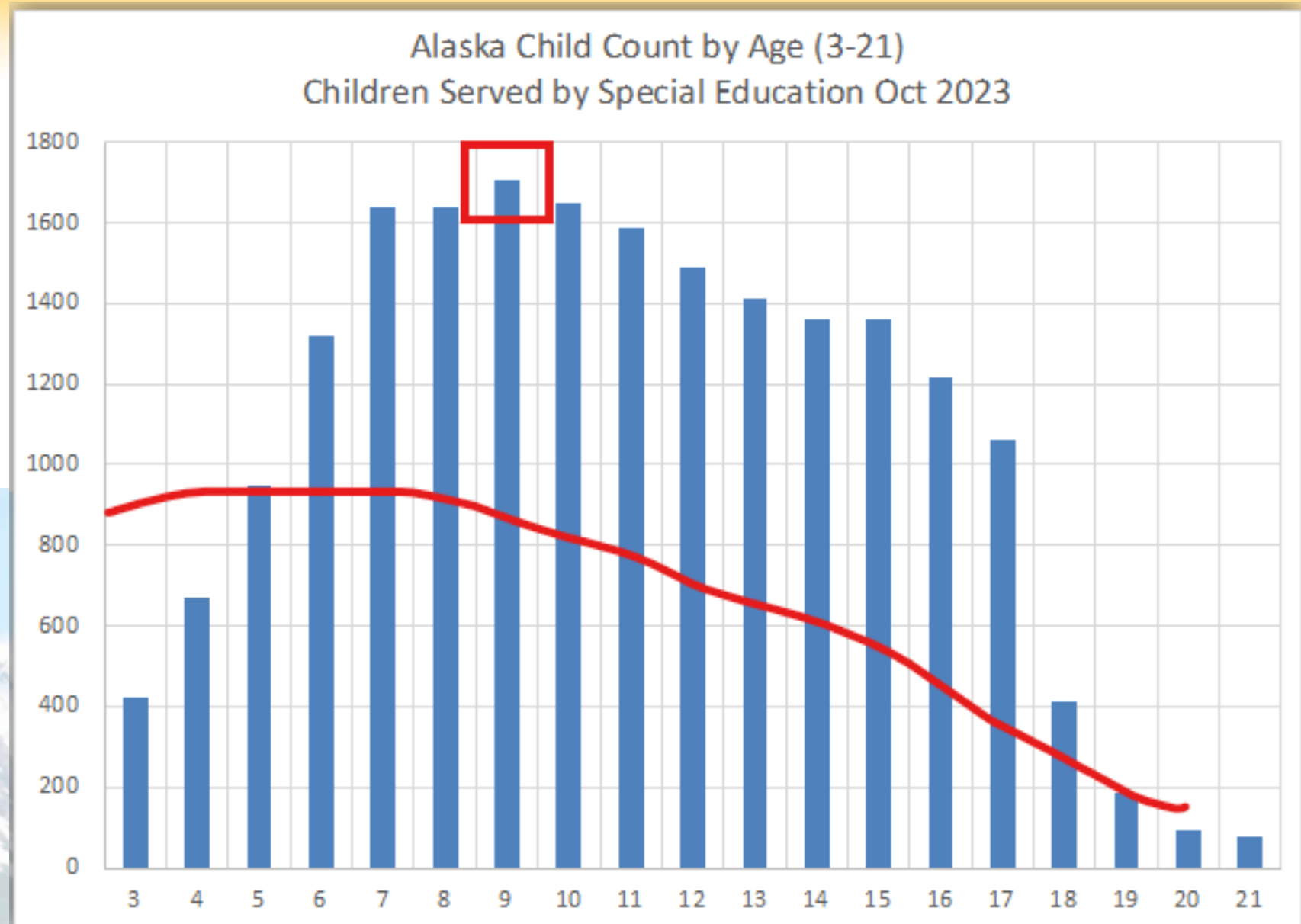
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# Identify Earlier

Many children who ultimately qualify for special education are not identified until age 7 or 9.

What would be the impact if we found them sooner?

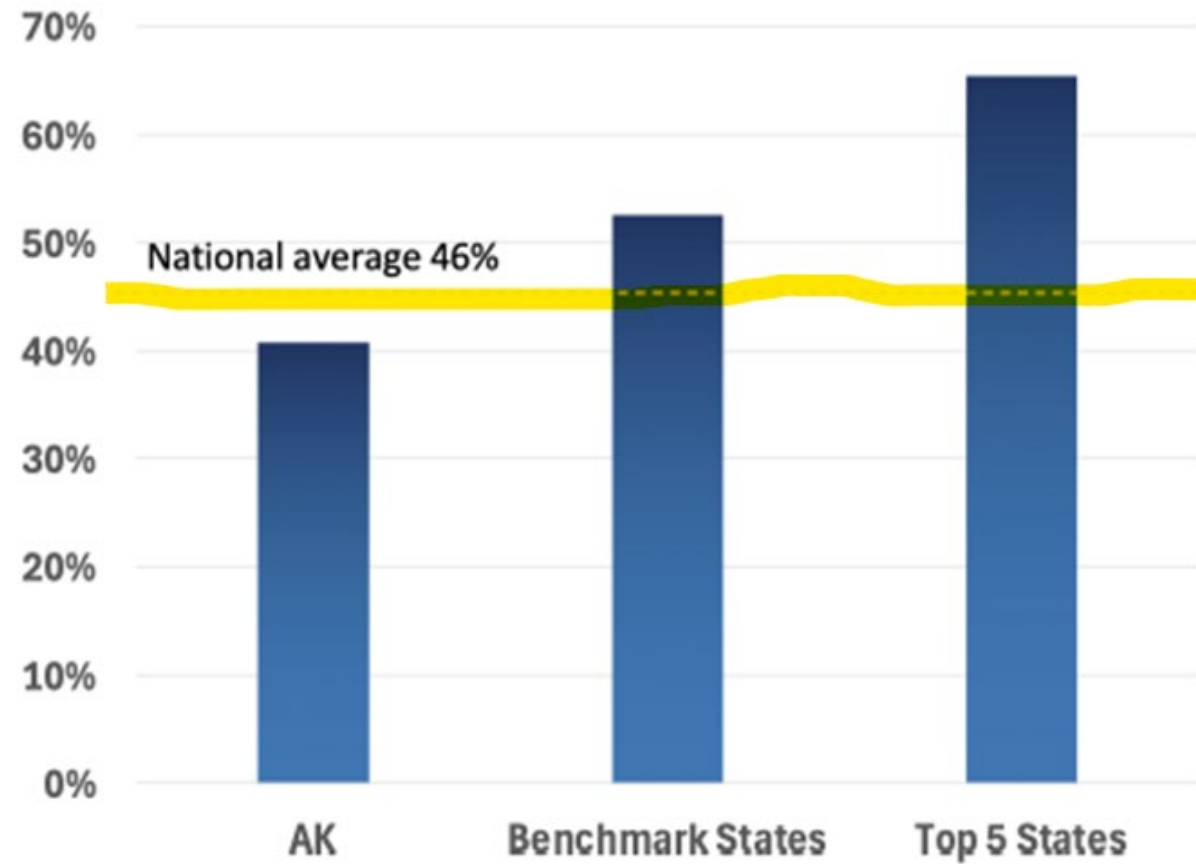


# AK Restrictive Eligibility

- Only 40% of Alaska's children meet 3 year old age expectations.
- States with eligibility criteria

## Alaska Trails Behind Other States

States with less restrictive eligibility help more children meet developmental age expectations at age 3 as a result of early intervention services.



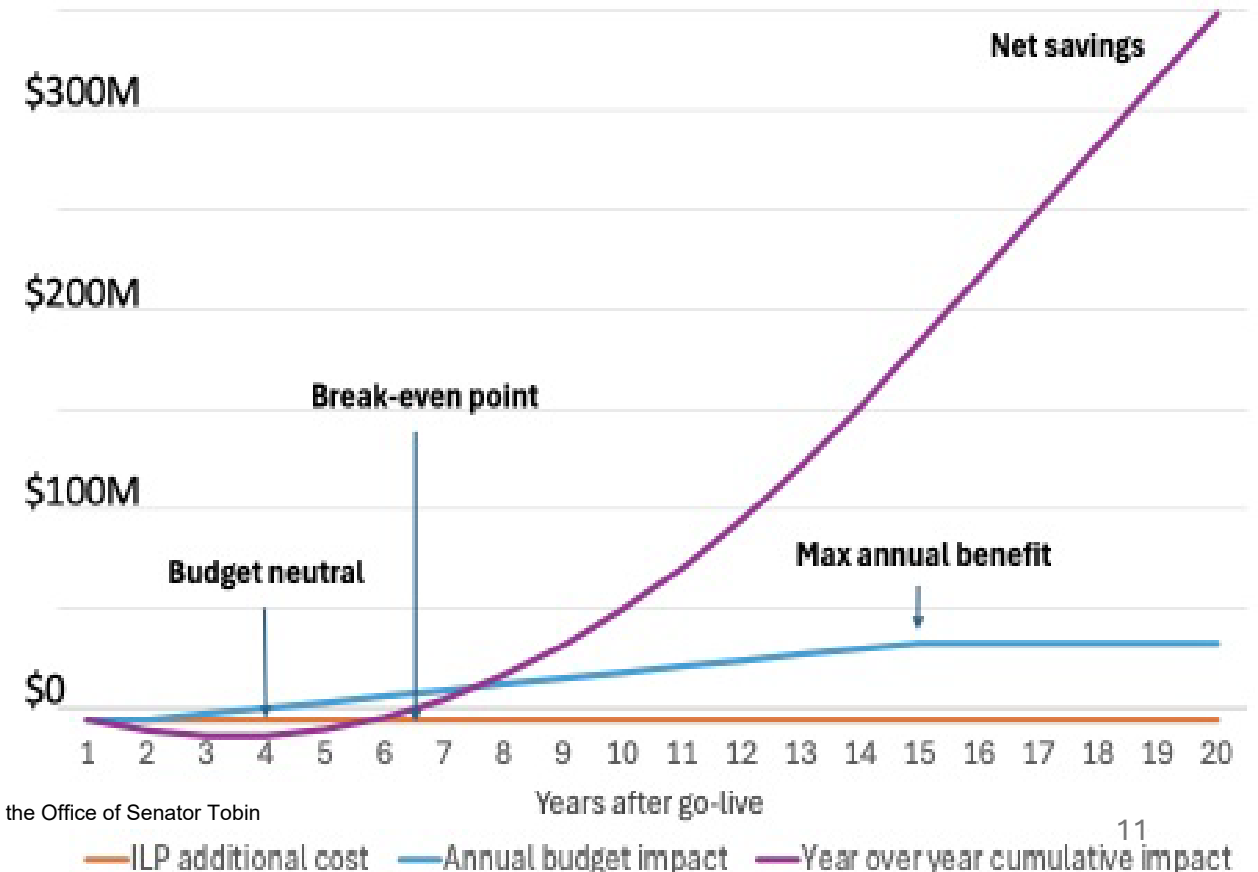
Percent of children in ILP that achieve age typical development by age 3.

# Investing Earlier

- Alaska is anticipated to be cost neutral in year 6 and realize a savings starting FY33, if SB178 passes this session.
- Figures based on 46% of newly eligible children who would not need Special Education services at age 5

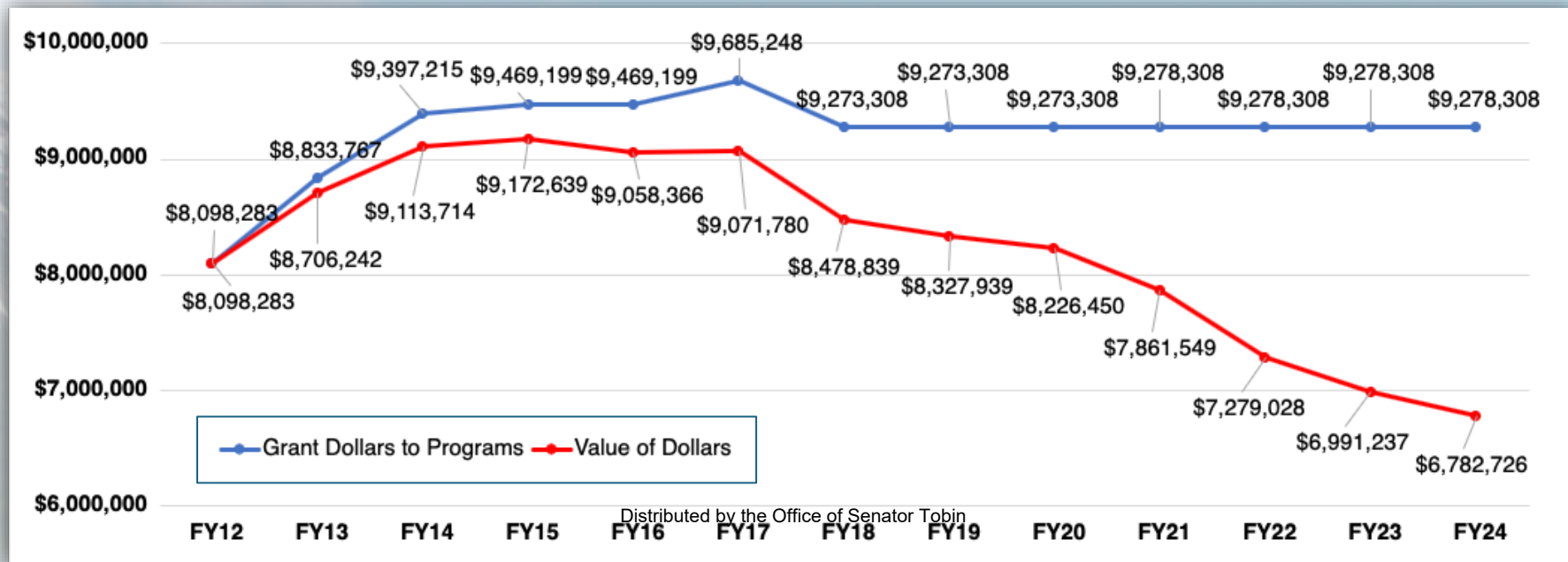
## Substantial Savings That Can Be Used for Other Education Needs

For each child that doesn't need special education due to ILP services, the state could save up to **\$229k**. Further savings from other services such as juvenile justice and adult Medicaid services are expected, but not easily quantified.



# Challenges in Alaska

- Funding has been flat for a decade, while costs have risen 25%.
- Equity issues: rural and urban disparities in service availability.
- Individual children receive less frequent services due to funding deterioration.



# Economic Impact of investing in young children

- Combat outmigration of young families looking for quality education
- Reduces strain on Child Protection system
  - Children under 3 make up the majority of kids in foster care
  - Children with disabilities are more likely to suffer abuse/neglect
- Supporting families to be in the workforce by reducing needs of:
  - Special needs childcare
  - Children take part in typical classroom curriculum-reduced special ed costs
- Reduced strain on juvenile justice, behavioral health, public benefits
- Children who are successful in school graduate and become part of Alaska's workforce.

# Take-Away: Invest in the People of Alaska

- Approve SB178 to expand eligibility and approve \$5.72M funding for AK ILP.
- Ensure all Alaskan children have equitable access to early intervention services.
- ROI: Early intervention saves up to \$229K per child just in special education costs. Annual cost savings up to \$34.9M.
- Build the workforce of tomorrow.



# Thank You

For questions, or more information:

Amy Simpson, Programs for Infants and Children, Anchorage

Niamh Dardis, REACH, Juneau

Rich Saville, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

## 5 Reasons To Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention



For years early intervention has helped families learn how to be the best teachers for their children with developmental delays or disabilities. Early intervention's evidence-based practice of helping families incorporate intervention strategies into daily routines increases children's rate of growth in key developmental areas, multiplies the opportunities and effects of intervention, and increases the return on every dollar spent.

Discover how early intervention can help the children and families in your community and healthcare practice.

*"Investing in the continuum of learning from birth to age 5 not only impacts each child, but it also strengthens our country's workforce today and prepares future generations to be competitive in the global economy tomorrow."*

*Professor James Heckman, University of Chicago*

### 1 Reduces Need for Special Education

The National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS) Special Education and Part C Programs tracked children with a developmental delay and found 46% did not need special education by the time they reached kindergarten as a result of early intervention services.



**36%**

had no disability, and were not receiving special education services.

**10%**

were reported to have a disability, but were not receiving special education.

### 2 Positive Results for Children

Studies found that children who participate in high-quality early intervention/early childhood development programs tend to have:

- Less need for special education and other remedial work.
- Greater language abilities.
- Improved nutrition and health.
- Experienced less child abuse and neglect.



### 3 Works with Brain Development

Neural circuits create the foundation for learning, behavior and health. These circuits are most flexible from birth to three.

Early social/emotional development provides the foundation upon which cognitive and language skills develop.

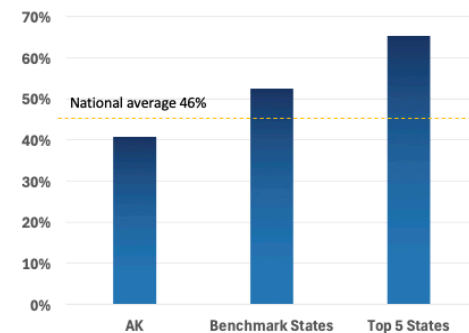
High-quality early intervention services can change a child's developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.

Intervention is likely to be more effective and less costly when it is provided earlier in life rather than later.



### 4 Because of Restrictive Eligibility, Alaska Trails Behind Other States

States with less restrictive eligibility help more children meet developmental age expectations at age 3 as a result of early intervention services.



### 5 Substantial Savings That Can Be Used for Other Education Needs

The state could save up to **\$229k** for each child that doesn't need special education due to expanded ILP services. Further savings from other services such as juvenile justice and adult Medicaid services are expected, but not easily quantified.

