

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## SENATE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE



**Chair**  
**Sen. Forrest Dunbar**

**Vice Chair**  
**Cathy Giessel**

**Senator**  
**Löki Tobin**

**Senator**  
**Matt Claman**

**Senator**  
**Robert Myers**

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### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### **SB 178: EXPAND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES 34-LS0918 Version N**

Senate Bill 178 seeks to expand access to Alaska’s Infant Learning Program (ILP) and provide healthcare and therapy services to more young children in Alaska who experience developmental delays. Expanding access to the program will result in more families receiving early intervention services, which will reduce the need for more intensive interventions later. Research indicates that children in early intervention programs experience improved life outcomes compared to those who did not receive early interventions. As a result, early intervention programs have a substantial return on investment.

SB 178 would expand access to the ILP system by lowering the eligibility criteria to children with a 25 percent developmental delay. This would mirror the 25 percent delay standard used for special education services. Currently, the eligibility threshold for the Alaska Infant Learning Program is set in regulation at a 50 percent delay. Compared to the rest of the nation, Alaska’s eligibility criteria are overly restrictive, and there is no evidence-based rationale for not serving children with a 25% delay. Under Alaska’s current restrictive eligibility structure, many healthcare providers hesitate to refer children for services because they are unsure if the child will meet the state’s stringent developmental delay requirements.

In addition to expanding eligibility for the ILP system, SB 178 would enable the Alaska ILP system to access more federal Medicaid funding, thereby reducing the need for additional state general funds in the future. The bill also requires the Department of Health to review the conditions that qualify as a disability and make recommendations to the Alaska State Legislature on updating those conditions. The bill also requires the Department of Health to submit a detailed report to the legislature by July 1, 2029.

The changes to Alaska’s ILP system, as included in SB 178, are based on recommendations from the Alaska Department of Health’s Interagency Coordinating Council. The bill was developed with input from stakeholders across Alaska who work with disabled children and families.

**CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 178(FIN)**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

**BY THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Offered: 5/11/26**

**Referred: Rules**

**Sponsor(s): SENATE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to early intervention services for certain children; relating to optional**  
2 **services under the medical assistance program; and providing for an effective date."**

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **\* Section 1.** AS 47.07.030(b) is amended to read:

5 (b) In addition to the mandatory services specified in (a) of this section and the  
6 services provided under (d) of this section, the department may offer only the  
7 following optional services: case management services for traumatic or acquired brain  
8 injury; case management and nutrition services for pregnant women; personal care  
9 services in a recipient's home; emergency hospital services; long-term care  
10 noninstitutional services; medical supplies and equipment; advanced practice  
11 registered nurse services; clinic services; rehabilitative services for children eligible  
12 for services under AS 47.07.063, substance abusers, and emotionally disturbed or  
13 chronically mentally ill adults; targeted case management services; inpatient  
14 psychiatric facility services for individuals 65 years of age or older and individuals

1 under 21 years of age; psychologists' services; clinical social workers' services; marital  
 2 and family therapy services; professional counseling services; midwife services;  
 3 prescribed drugs; physical therapy; occupational therapy; chiropractic services; low-  
 4 dose mammography screening, as defined in AS 21.42.375(e); hospice care; treatment  
 5 of speech, hearing, and language disorders; adult dental and dental hygiene services;  
 6 prosthetic devices and eyeglasses; optometrists' services; intermediate care facility  
 7 services, including intermediate care facility services for persons with intellectual and  
 8 developmental disabilities; skilled nursing facility services for individuals under 21  
 9 years of age; **early intervention services for children eligible under AS 47.20.080;**  
 10 and reasonable transportation to and from the point of medical care.

11 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 47.20.060 is amended to read:

12 **Sec. 47.20.060. Purpose.** It is the purpose of AS 47.20.060 - 47.20.290 to

13 (1) subject to the availability of funding, provide quality learning and  
 14 related early intervention family support services to eligible children under the age of  
 15 three who have developmental delays or disabilities [AND, ON A DISCRETIONARY  
 16 BASIS, TO THOSE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF THREE WHO ARE AT  
 17 RISK OF DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS OR DISABILITIES];

18 (2) bring together and make optimal use of all available federal, state,  
 19 local, and private resources for the benefit of children under the age of three with  
 20 developmental delays or disabilities and their families;

21 (3) expand and improve existing learning and early intervention  
 22 services and to provide and arrange for comprehensive services through local agencies  
 23 and statewide support programs.

24 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 47.20.070(c) is amended to read:

25 (c) In connection with the system established under (a) of this section, the  
 26 department shall

27 (1) develop a state plan that identifies the best methods of providing  
 28 services to children under the age of three with developmental delays or disabilities  
 29 and their families and report to the governor on the extent to which that plan is being  
 30 implemented in the state;

31 (2) develop and implement an educational program concerning the

1 nature and effects of developmental delays and disabilities;

2 (3) serve as a clearinghouse for educational materials and information  
3 about developmental delays and disabilities;

4 (4) organize and encourage training programs for persons who provide  
5 services to children under the age of three with developmental delays and disabilities  
6 and their families;

7 (5) [ESTABLISH A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR  
8 PARAPROFESSIONALS WHO PROVIDE SERVICES TO CHILDREN UNDER  
9 THE AGE OF THREE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS AND DISABILITIES  
10 AND THEIR FAMILIES;

11 (6)] cooperate with other public and private agencies and individuals to  
12 facilitate the transition of children served in the early intervention system to the formal  
13 education system;

14 (6) [(7)] identify and use all public and private resources available to  
15 the state;

16 (7) [AND (8)] monitor and evaluate the services provided to ensure the  
17 demonstrable effectiveness of the services and compliance with state and federal law  
18 and department policy regarding the provision of early intervention services; **and**

19 **(8) at least every five years, in consultation with medical**  
20 **professionals and the state entity that satisfies the requirement for a state**  
21 **interagency coordinating council as provided under 20 U.S.C. 1441, review the**  
22 **conditions that qualify as a disability under AS 47.20.060 - 47.20.290 and, as**  
23 **appropriate, make recommendations to the legislature on updating those**  
24 **conditions.**

25 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 47.20.080(a) is amended to read:

26 (a) A child and the child's family are eligible for [CORE] early intervention  
27 services [AND ADDITIONAL EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES] under  
28 AS 47.20.060 - 47.20.290 if the child is under the age of three and

29 [(1)] experiencing developmental delay or disability [; OR

30 (2) AT RISK OF EXPERIENCING DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY  
31 OR DISABILITY IF EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES ARE NOT

1 PROVIDED].

2 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 47.20.100 is amended to read:

3 **Sec. 47.20.100. Individualized family service plan.** The individualized  
4 family service plan developed under AS 47.20.090(b)(2) shall be based on the  
5 evaluation conducted under AS 47.20.090(b)(1) and must include [, SUBJECT TO  
6 AS 47.20.080(b),]

7 (1) provisions for case management services to implement the plan,  
8 including the name of the case manager from the profession most immediately  
9 relevant to the child's or family's needs who will be responsible for the implementation  
10 of the plan and coordination with other agencies and persons;

11 (2) a statement of the child's present levels of physical development,  
12 cognitive development, language and speech development, psychosocial development,  
13 and self-help skills, based on appropriate objective criteria;

14 (3) a description of the family's concerns, priorities, and resources as  
15 they relate to the future enhancement of the child's development;

16 (4) a description of the specific early intervention services that will  
17 help meet the unique needs of the child and the family, including the frequency,  
18 intensity, and method with which the services should be delivered;

19 (5) the projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated  
20 duration of the services;

21 (6) an outline of the major outcomes expected to be achieved for the  
22 child and the family along with the criteria, procedures, and timelines that will be used  
23 to determine the degree to which progress toward achieving the outcomes are being  
24 made and whether modifications or revisions of the outcomes or services are  
25 necessary; and

26 (7) a statement of the steps that will be taken to support the transition  
27 of the child and the family to the use of services available under other appropriate  
28 programs, including programs for children who are three years of age or older.

29 \* **Sec. 6.** AS 47.20.290(4) is amended to read:

30 (4) "developmentally delayed" means

31 **(A) for services not provided under 20 U.S.C. 1431 - 1445**

1 **(Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act), as amended,** functioning at  
 2 least 15 percent below a chronological or corrected age or **the equivalent** [1.5]  
 3 standard **deviation** [DEVIATIONS] below age appropriate norms in one or  
 4 more of the following areas: cognitive development, gross motor development,  
 5 sensory development, speech or language development, or psychosocial  
 6 development, including self-help skills and behavior, as measured and verified  
 7 by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures or through systematic  
 8 observation of functional abilities in a daily routine by two professionals and a  
 9 parent, developmental history, and appropriate assessment procedures; **or**

10 **(B) for services provided under 20 U.S.C. 1431 - 1445**  
 11 **(Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act), as amended, functioning**  
 12 **at least 25 percent below a chronological or corrected age or the**  
 13 **equivalent standard deviation below age appropriate norms in one of the**  
 14 **areas listed in (A) of this paragraph, or at least 20 percent below a**  
 15 **chronological or corrected age or the equivalent standard deviation below**  
 16 **age appropriate norms in two or more of the areas listed in (A) of this**  
 17 **paragraph;**

18 \* **Sec. 7.** AS 47.20.290(6) is repealed and reenacted to read:

19 (6) "early intervention services" means the following services designed  
 20 to help meet the developmental needs of a child under the age of three who is  
 21 developmentally delayed or disabled:

- 22 (A) assistive technology devices and services;  
 23 (B) early identification, screening, and assessment;  
 24 (C) family training, counseling, and home visits;  
 25 (D) health services for the child that are necessary to enable the  
 26 child to benefit from the other services described in this paragraph;  
 27 (E) medical services only for diagnostic or evaluation purposes;  
 28 (F) occupational therapy;  
 29 (G) physical therapy;  
 30 (H) psychological services;  
 31 (I) service coordination services;

1 (J) sign language and cued language services;

2 (K) special instruction (developmental therapy);

3 (L) speech-language pathology and audiology services;

4 (M) social work services;

5 (N) transportation and related costs that are necessary to enable  
6 the child and the child's family to receive a service described in this paragraph;

7 (O) vision services; and

8 (P) other services identified by the department in regulation.

9 \* **Sec. 8.** AS 47.20.080(b), 47.20.290(1), and 47.20.290(2) are repealed.

10 \* **Sec. 9.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
11 read:

12 REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE. By July 1, 2029, the Department of Health shall  
13 submit a report to the senate secretary and chief clerk of the house of representatives and  
14 notify the legislature that the report is available. The report must include the number of  
15 children in the state who need early intervention services, the number of children in the state  
16 being provided early intervention services, the types of early intervention services provided in  
17 the state, the cost of early intervention services provided in the state, the amount of federal  
18 funding received by the state for early intervention services, and recommendations for any  
19 additional statutory changes that may be needed to improve and expand early intervention  
20 services to eligible children under the age of three who have developmental delays or  
21 disabilities.

22 \* **Sec. 10.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
23 read:

24 MEDICAID STATE PLAN FEDERAL APPROVAL. To the extent necessary to  
25 implement this Act, the Department of Health shall amend and submit for federal approval the  
26 state plan for medical assistance coverage consistent with AS 47.07.030(b), as amended by  
27 sec. 1 of this Act.

28 \* **Sec. 11.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
29 read:

30 CONDITIONAL EFFECT. (a) Section 1 of this Act takes effect only if, on or before  
31 July 1, 2028, the United States Department of Health and Human Services

1                   (1) approves the amendments to the state plan for medical assistance coverage  
2 under AS 47.07.030; or

3                   (2) determines that approval of the amendments to the state plan for medical  
4 assistance coverage under AS 47.07.030 is not necessary.

5                   (b) The commissioner of health shall notify the revisor of statutes in writing within 30  
6 days after the United States Department of Health and Human Services approves the  
7 amendments to the state plan or determines that approval is not necessary under this section.

8                   \* **Sec. 12.** If sec. 1 of this Act takes effect, it takes effect on the day after the United States  
9 Department of Health and Human Services approves the amendments to the state plan for  
10 medical assistance coverage submitted under sec. 10 of this Act or determines that approval of  
11 the amendments is not necessary.

12                   \* **Sec. 13.** Except as provided in sec. 12 of this Act, this Act takes effect July 1, 2026.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE



**Sen. Lyman Hoffman**  
State Capitol, Room 518  
(907) 465-4453

*Sen.Lyman.Hoffman@akleg.gov*

**Sen. Bert Stedman**  
State Capitol, Room 516  
(907) 465-3873

*Sen.Bert.Stedman@akleg.gov*

**Sen. Donald Olson**  
State Capitol, Room 508  
(907) 465-3707

*Sen.Donny.Olson@akleg.gov*

Official Business

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### **Explanation of Changes CS for Senate Bill 178 (FIN)**

Version 34-LS0918\A to 34-LS0918\N

#### **Sections 11 and 12:**

Updates conditional effective date from July 1, 2026 to July 1, 2028 and provides conforming language for the Department of Health in seeking approval for from United States Department of Health and Human Services for amendments to the state plan for medical assistance coverage.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## SENATE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE



**Chair**  
**Sen. Forrest Dunbar**

**Vice Chair**  
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**Senator**  
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**Sectional Analysis**  
**SB 178: EXPAND EARLY INTERVENTION**  
**SERVICES 34-LS0918 Version N**

**Section 1** – Amends AS 47.07.030 (b) to add early intervention services for children with developmental delays to the medical services provided by the Alaska Department of Health.

**Section 2** – Amends AS 47.20.060 to delete the discretionary authority of the department to serve children under the age of three who are at risk of developmental delays or disabilities. AS 47.20.060 is the statute governing the department's authority to provide quality learning and related early intervention family support services to eligible children under the age of three with developmental delays.

**Section 3** – Amends AS 47.20.070 (c), which is the statute governing the establishment of the early intervention services program, to delete the mandate for the Department of Health to establish a training program for paraprofessionals who provide services to children under the age of three with developmental delays and disabilities.

Section 3 adds a new subsection (8) requiring the Department of Health to review the conditions that qualify as a disability and make recommendations to the Alaska State Legislature on updating those conditions. The review must be conducted at least every five years, in consultation with medical professionals and the Department of Health's Interagency Coordinating Council.

**Section 4** – Amends AS 47.20.080 (a), the statute governing eligibility for early intervention services, to stipulate that a child and the child's family are eligible for services if the child is experiencing developmental delay or disability.

**Section 5** – Amends AS 47.20.100, the statute governing individualized family service plans, to remove the right of the Department of Health to eliminate coverage for services if there is insufficient funding to provide services to all eligible persons.

**Section 6** – Amends AS 47.20.290 (4) to change the definition of "developmentally delayed" to align with the federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act and to expand eligibility to those children with a developmental delay of at least 25 percent below a chronological or

corrected age or equivalent standard deviation below age-appropriate norms in one of the identified areas listed in the definition of “developmentally delayed.” The standard is 20 percent for children in two or more of the areas listed.

**Section 7** – Repeals and reenacts AS 47.20.290 (6) to list the services that qualify as early intervention services. Qualified services include:

- Audiology services
- Health services
- Medical services
- Nursing services
- Nutrition services
- Occupational therapy
- Psychological services
- Special Instruction
- Transportation and related costs
- Vision
- Vision services.

**Section 8** – Repeals three sections of state law.

AS 47.20.080 (b) allows the Department to eliminate coverage if there is insufficient funding.

AS 47.20.290 (1) is the definition of “additional early intervention services.” The definition is no longer necessary because early intervention services are detailed in Section 7 of this act.

AS 47.20.290 (2) is the definition of “core early intervention services.” This definition is no longer applicable because the act eliminates “core” services in favor of a broader list of early intervention services.

**Section 9** – Adds a new section to uncodified law requiring the Alaska Department of Health to submit a report to the Alaska State Legislature by July 1, 2029, that includes details about how many children in Alaska need early intervention services and the types of services provided. The report must also include the cost to the State of Alaska of providing services and the amount of federal funding received by the state. Additionally, the report must include recommendations for further statutory changes to enhance and expand early intervention services for eligible children under the age of three who have developmental delays or disabilities.

**Section 10** – Adds a new section to the uncodified law requiring the Department of Health to amend and resubmit for federal approval the state plan for medical assistance coverage to align with the changes made by this act.

**Section 11** – Adds a new section to the uncodified law stipulating that the changes to early intervention services only take effect if the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approves the amendment to the state plan for medical assistance coverage or determines that approval of the amendments to the state plan is not necessary.

**Section 12** – Stipulates that section 1 of this act takes effect on July 1, 2026, if the changes in early intervention services included in this act are approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Section 13** – Sets an effective date of July 1, 2026, for this act.

*Staff Contact: Ariel Harbison, Senate Health and Social Services Committee Aide, Senator Forrest Dunbar*

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2026 Legislative Session

Bill Version:	CSSB 178(FIN)
Fiscal Note Number:	4
(S) Publish Date:	5/11/2026

Identifier: SB178-DOH-SDSA-02-28-26  
 Title: EXPAND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES  
 Sponsor: HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES  
 Requester: (S) FIN

Department: Department of Health  
 Appropriation: Senior and Disabilities Services  
 Allocation: Senior and Disabilities Services Administration  
 OMB Component Number: 2663

### Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2027	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2027 Request	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>						
Personal Services	308.5		308.5	308.5	308.5	308.5	308.5	308.5
Travel	22.0		22.0	22.0	22.0	22.0	22.0	22.0
Services	114.0		114.0	114.0	114.0	114.0	114.0	114.0
Commodities	10.0		4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>454.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>

### Fund Source (Operating Only)

1037 GF/MH (UGF)	454.5		448.5	448.5	448.5	448.5	448.5	448.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>454.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>	<b>448.5</b>

### Positions

Full-time	2.0		2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Part-time								
Temporary								

### Change in Revenues

None								
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2026) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2027) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*

**Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account?** No  
*(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

### ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes  
 If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 07/01/27

### Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Updated to SLA2026 fiscal note template. Updated position data to reflect current costs.

Prepared By: Anthony Newman, Director  
 Division: Senior and Disabilities Services  
 Approved By: Pam Halloran, Assistant Commissioner  
 Agency: Department of Health

Phone: (907)465-5481  
 Date: 02/26/2026  
 Date: 02/28/2026

REPORTED OUT OF  
SFC 05/08/2026

## FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## Analysis

This bill would allow the department to pursue the addition of early intervention services as a reimbursable Medicaid service by adding it to the list of services listed under AS 47.07.030(b).

The bill clarifies who is eligible to receive early intervention services by removing mention of an at-risk population.

Every five years the department would be required to consult with medical professionals and the state entity that satisfies the federal requirement for the interagency coordinating council to periodically review the conditions that qualify as a disability under AS 47.20.060-47.20.290.

The bill would change the definition of developmental delay, with three sub-definitions under which an infant or child could meet the definition of having a developmental delay:

- 1) Infants or children who do not meet the eligibility requirements to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would meet the definition of developmental delay if they have a 15% delay in one or more areas. These infants and children are referred to as non-part C since they would not be eligible to receive services under the state's definition of eligibility for early intervention services under Part C (Section 303) of the IDEA.
- 2) Infants or children would meet the definition of developmental delay if they have a 25% delay in one area and would be eligible to receive early intervention services under IDEA.
- 3) Infants or children would meet the definition of developmental delay if they have at least a 20% delay in two or more areas and would be eligible to receive early intervention services under IDEA.

The bill would authorize the department to pursue a state plan amendment if necessary to add early intervention services as a Medicaid service and provides for a July 1, 2026, effective date.

The department anticipates needing two additional full-time positions, a Health Program Manager 2 and a Health Program Manager 3 to fulfill the requirements under SB178. Implementation of expanded enrollment and development of new early intervention billing codes will require significant policy and procedure updates and statewide staff training. The Health Program Manager 3 position is critical to address the additional technical assistance needed for Infant Learning programs around the state and provide supervision for Health Program Manager 2 Technical Assistants. The new Health Program Manager 2 will work directly with programs to recruit and retain qualified staff, work with the University of Alaska system to develop needed higher education programs, develop additional training in the Infant Learning Program Learning Management System, and host training for new providers as needed. Federal requirements under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires significant ongoing monitoring of services and programs, as well as on-site visits, all of which will be more work with more children enrolled and more providers in the Infant Learning Program system.

Personal Services: One full-time Health Program Manager 2 (including benefits), range 19, Anchorage: \$139.6 and one full-time Health Program Manager 3 (including benefits), range 21, Anchorage: \$168.9 annually, total \$308.5.

Travel: Travel for the required federal monitoring of sites, outreach, training, and education around Alaska, \$22.0 annually.

Services: Office space, phone, reimbursable service agreements for position support: \$40.0 annually for two positions. Contracts and services to support Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program training, outreach, and education: \$74.0 annually.

Commodities: Office supplies: \$4.0 annually starting in the second year.

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2026 Legislative Session

Bill Version:	CSSB 178(FIN)
Fiscal Note Number:	3
(S) Publish Date:	5/11/2026

Identifier: SB178-DOH-MS-02-28-26  
 Title: EXPAND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES  
 Sponsor: HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES  
 Requester: (S) FIN

Department: Department of Health  
 Appropriation: Medicaid Services  
 Allocation: Medicaid Services  
 OMB Component Number: 3234

### Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2027 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2027 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>								
Personal Services								
Travel								
Services								
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits			5,459.2	5,459.2	5,459.2	5,459.2	5,459.2	5,459.2
Miscellaneous								
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>

### Fund Source (Operating Only)

1002 Fed Rcpts (Fed)			2,729.6	2,729.6	2,729.6	2,729.6	2,729.6
1003 GF/Match (UGF)			2,729.6	2,729.6	2,729.6	2,729.6	2,729.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>	<b>5,459.2</b>

### Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

### Change in Revenues

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2026) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2027) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*

**Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account?** No  
*(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

### ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No  
 If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? N/A

### Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Updated to SLA2026 fiscal note template.

Prepared By: Terra Serpette, Director	Phone: (907)465-6333
Division: Medicaid Services	Date: 02/26/2026
Approved By: Pam Halloran, Assistant Commissioner	Date: 02/27/2026
Agency: Department of Health	

REPORTED OUT OF  
 SFC 05/08/2026

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Analysis

This bill would allow for the department to pursue the addition of early intervention services as a reimbursable Medicaid service by adding it to the list of services listed under AS 47.07.030(b).

The bill clarifies who is eligible to receive early intervention services by removing mention of an at-risk population.

Every five years the department would be required to consult with medical professionals and the state entity that satisfies the federal requirement for the interagency coordinating council to periodically review the conditions that qualify as a disability under AS 47.20.060-47.20.290.

The bill would change the definition of developmental delay, with three sub-definitions under which an infant or child could meet the definition of having a developmental delay:

- 1) Infants or children who do not meet the eligibility requirements to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would meet the definition of developmental delay if they have a 15% delay in one or more areas. These infants and children are referred to as non-part C since they would not be eligible to receive services under the state’s definition of eligibility for early intervention services under Part 303 of the IDEA.
- 2) Infants or children would meet the definition of developmental delay if they have a 25% delay in one area and would be eligible to receive early intervention services under IDEA.
- 3) Infants or children would meet the definition of developmental delay if they have at least a 20% delay in two or more areas and would be eligible to receive early intervention services under IDEA.

The bill would authorize the department to pursue a state plan amendment if necessary to add early intervention services as a Medicaid service and provides for a July 1, 2026 effective date.

The estimated cost of early intervention services under AS 47.20.080 can be calculated based on current service data from the Infant Learning Program data system and prior cost estimates from a 2011 Infant Learning Program cost study. Many key services provided in the early intervention program are not currently reimbursed by Alaska Medicaid but are reimbursed in most other states. The 2011 cost study estimated actual costs for these services. The attached cost estimate chart shows key services, the estimated cost per unit, and the number of units of each service provided in the past one- year period. This estimated cost of service is then multiplied by 57%, the percentage of Infant Learning Program children enrolled in Medicaid. In order to estimate the state Medicaid match, the estimated cost is then multiplied by the FMAP rate of 50%. Updates to the cost study may be required in the rate setting process but reflect our most accurate starting point of costs for the purpose of this estimate. In addition, there is uncertainty about how the proposed changes to the ILP eligibility criteria will actually impact enrollment.

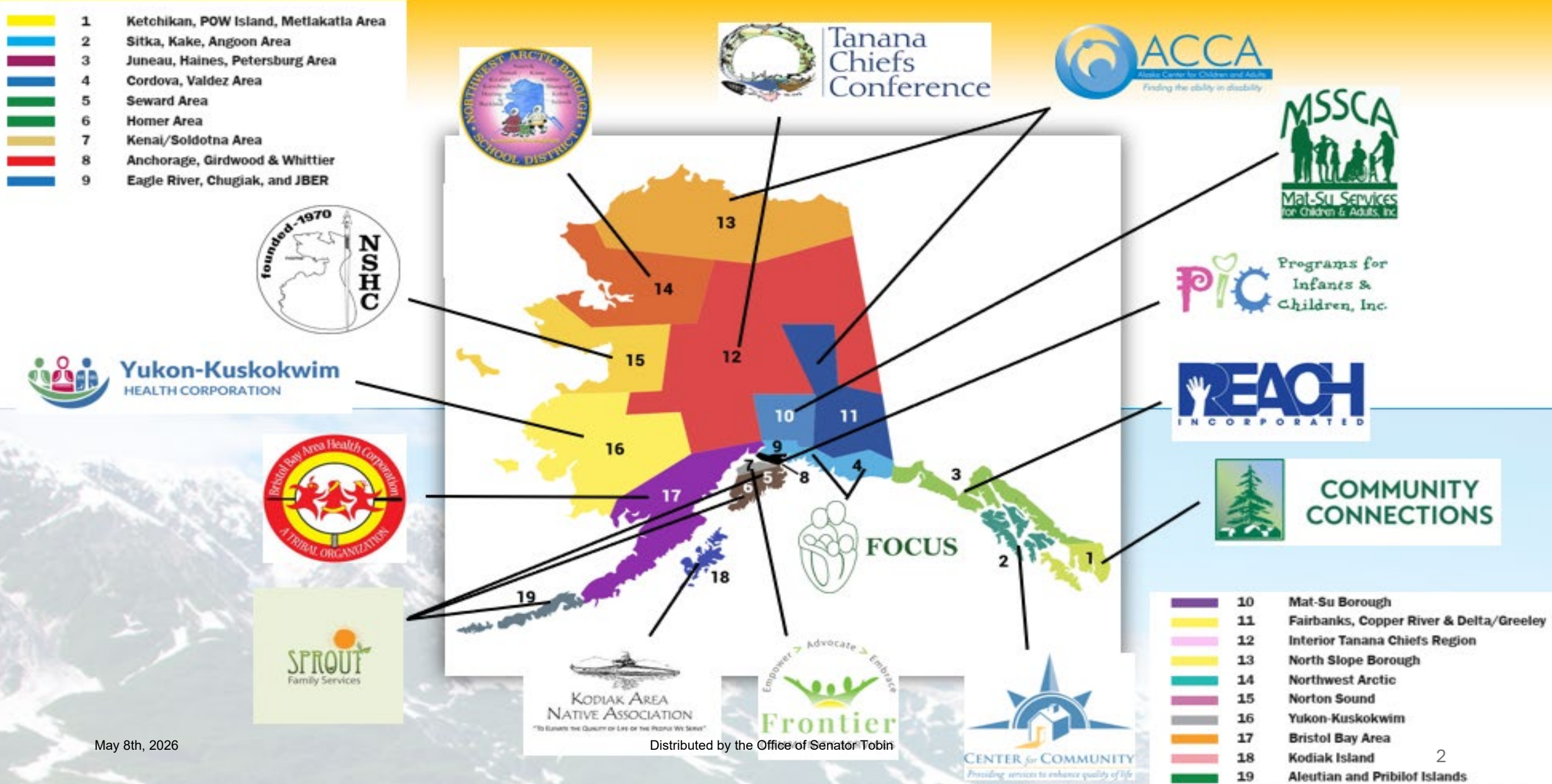
Service Type Category	Projected Cost Based on Increased Units of Service	Portion of Services for Medicaid Enrolled Clients (57%)	State Match (50%)
Referral Follow-Up/Intake	\$ 1,115,321	\$ 635,733	\$ 317,867
Screening	\$ 132,665	\$ 75,619	\$ 37,810
Evaluation/Assessment Other	\$ 1,296,475	\$ 738,991	\$ 369,496
Special Instruction	\$ 3,154,140	\$ 1,797,860	\$ 898,930
Occupational Therapy	\$ 1,303,862	\$ 743,201	\$ 371,601
Physical Therapy	\$ 917,938	\$ 523,225	\$ 261,612
Speech Language Therapy	\$ 1,544,891	\$ 880,588	\$ 440,294
Behavioral Health	\$ 112,232	\$ 63,972	\$ 31,986
	<b>\$ 9,577,525</b>	<b>\$ 5,459,189</b>	<b>\$ 2,729,595</b>

*Cost based on expanded eligibility*

# 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

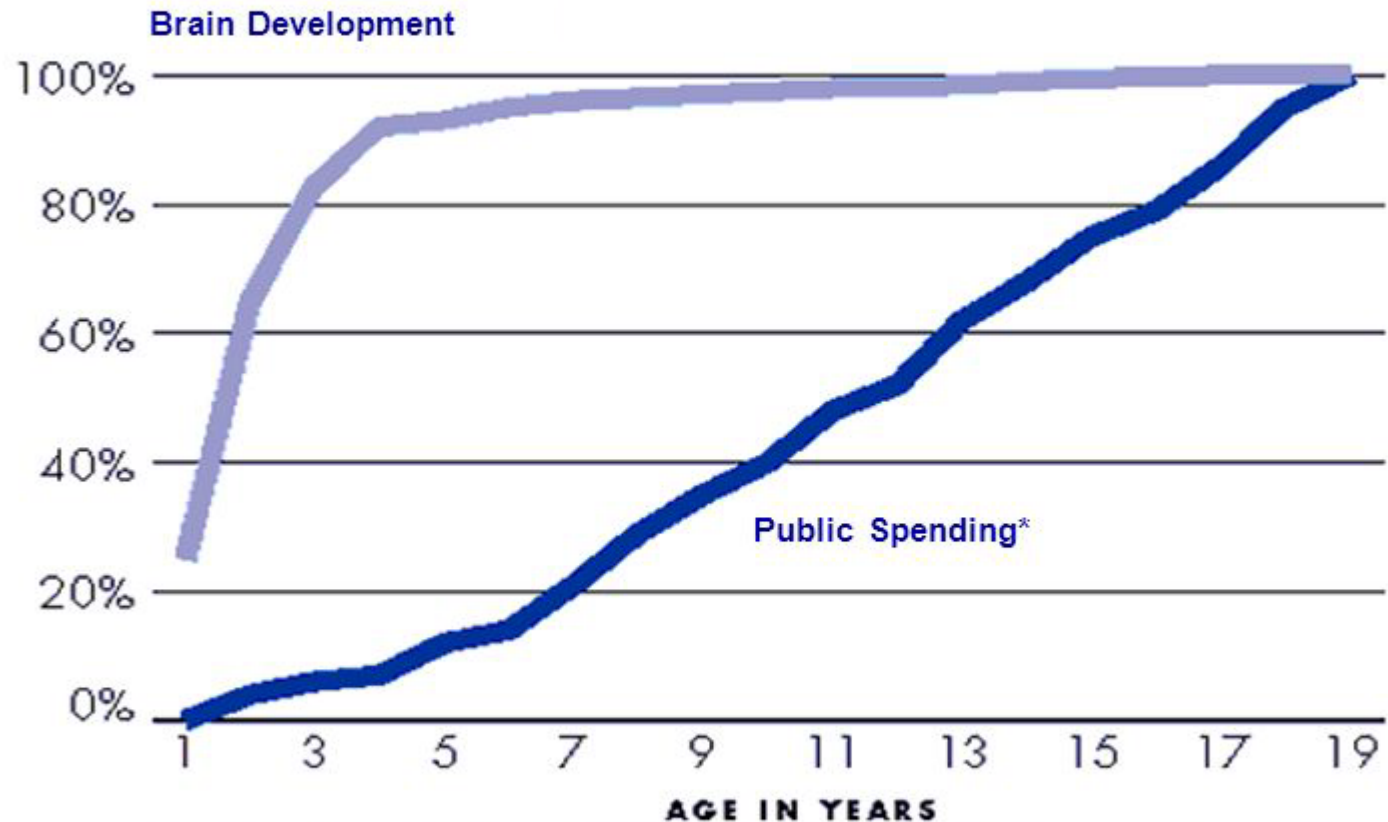
- Mandated services for children 0-3 who experience developmental delays or disabilities during the most critical period of brain development.
- Jointly funded by State and Feds
- Services provided at no cost to families
- ILP is voluntary! Parents choose to:
  - Evaluate
  - Enroll
  - Service to receive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

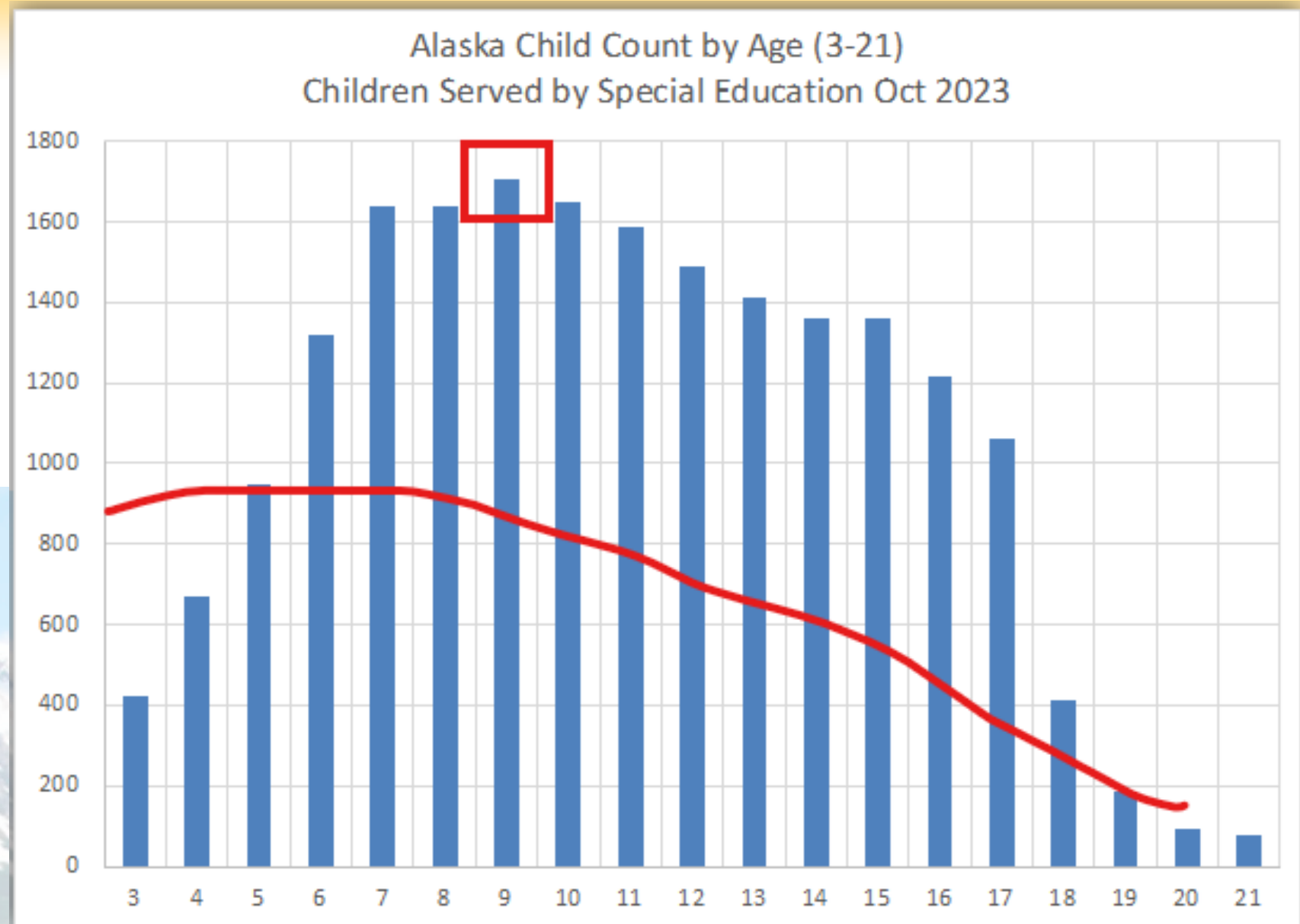
May 8th, 2026

Distributed by the Office of Senator Tobin

# 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?

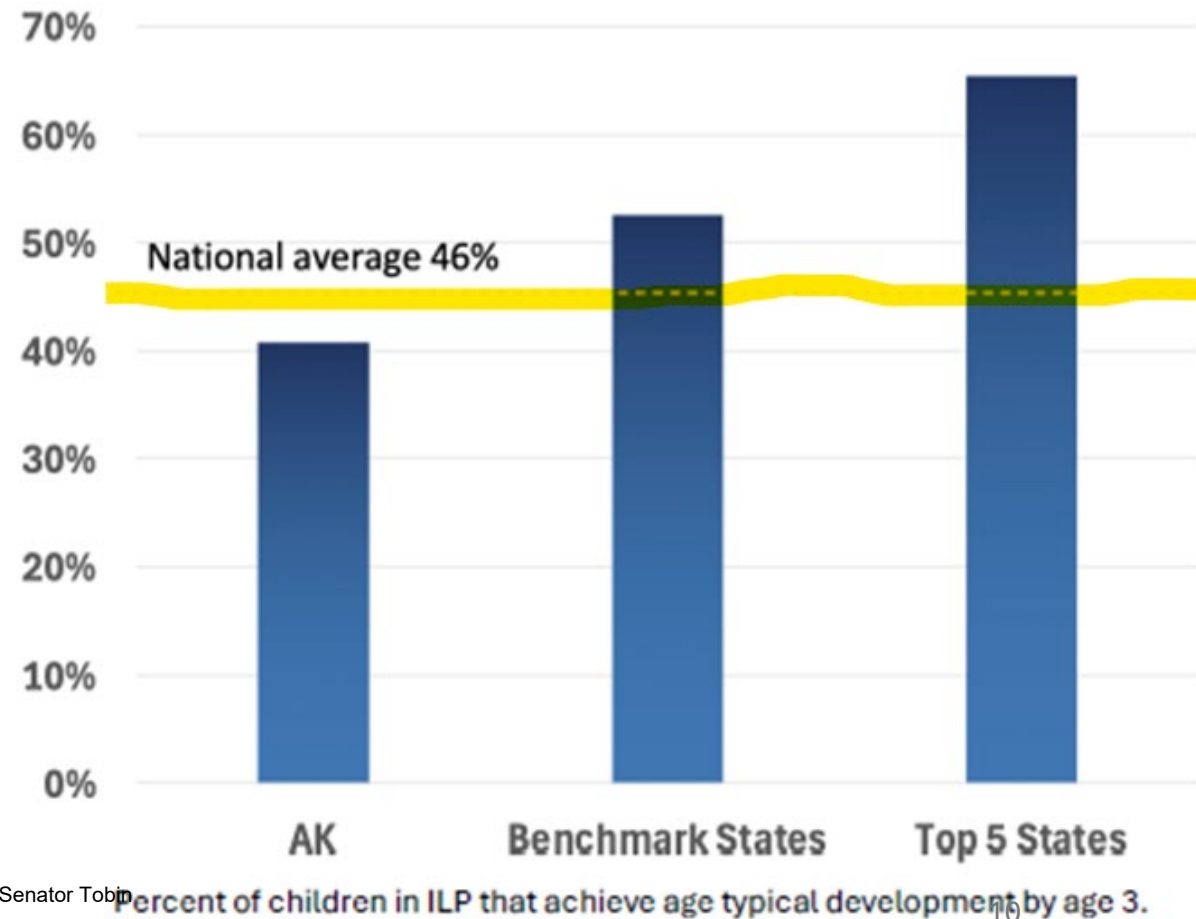


# AK Restrictive Eligibility

- 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.

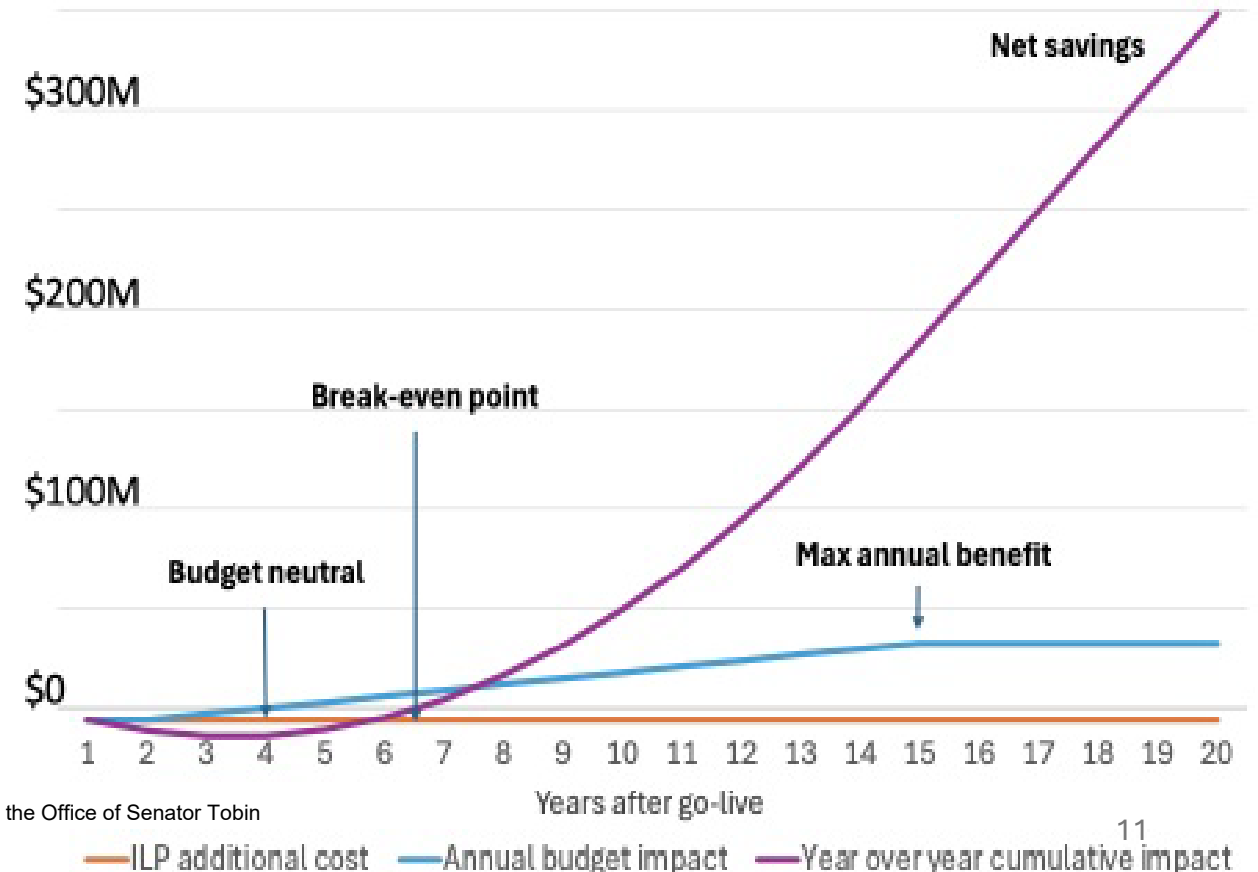


# Investing Earlier

- 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

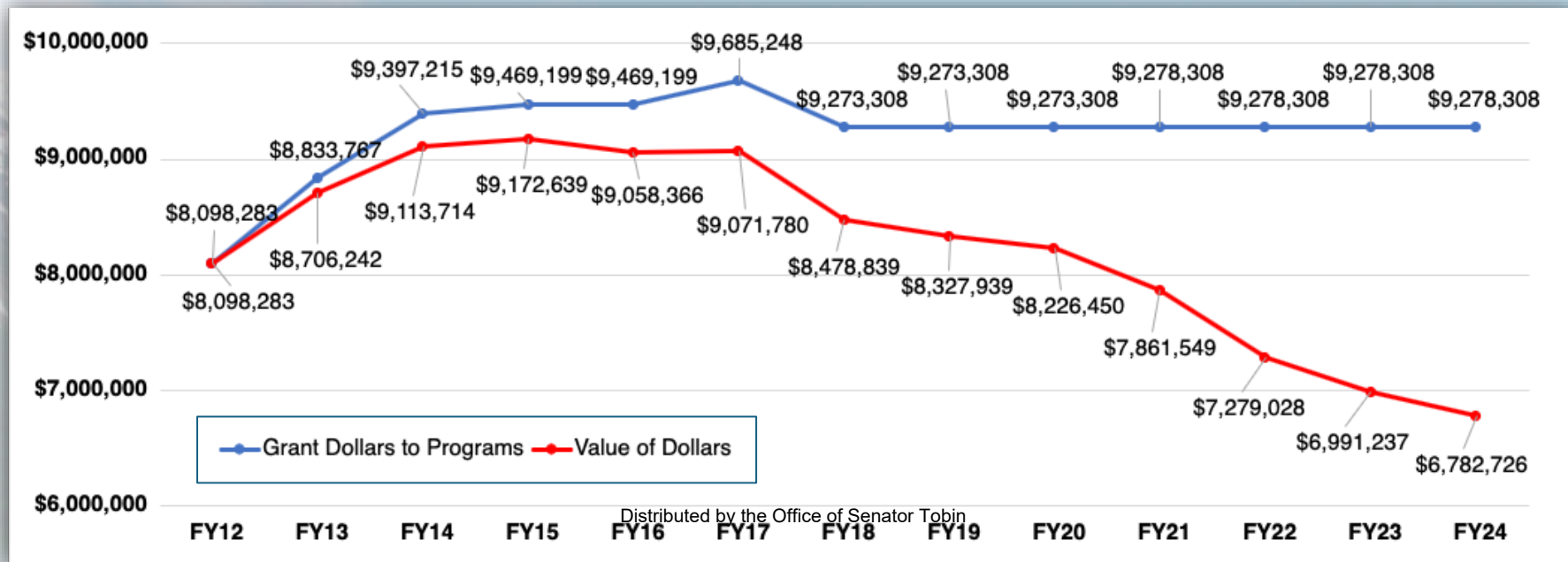
## Substantial Savings That Can Be Used for Other Education Needs

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.

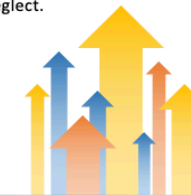
**10%**

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.

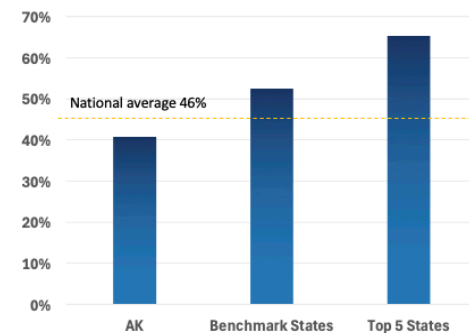
High-quality early intervention services can change a child's developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.

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



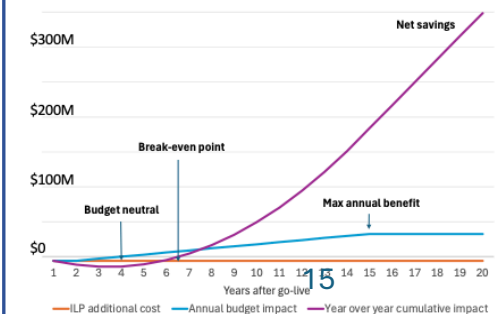
### 4 Because of Restrictive Eligibility, Alaska Trails Behind Other States

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.





GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES  
& SPECIAL EDUCATION

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director  
550 W 7th Ave Suite 1220  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
Main: 907.269.8990  
Toll Free: 1.888.269.8990  
Fax: 907.269.8995

April 28, 2025

Re: Support of SB 178 "Expansion of Early Intervention Services"

Dear Senate Health and Social Services Committee Members:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC) as required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Through the ICC, the Council works with Senior and Disability Services (SDS) and advises the Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (ILP) to ensure infants and toddlers who experience developmental delays across the state receive the services they need to grow and succeed.

Alaska has the most restrictive eligibility criteria for early intervention services in the nation. Currently to qualify for ILP services, a child must exhibit a 50% delay in one developmental area. In other words, a 2-year-old must be functioning at a 1-year-old level to qualify for services. This bill will expand eligibility for the ILP from 50% to 25% developmental delay to align eligibility for ILP services with eligibility for K-12 special education eliminating an inequity of services. A child's brain develops the most from birth to age 5. Expanding eligibility for the ILP we will ensure the services for these children are provided at a time when they will have the most impact rather than delaying services until later years. To assist in funding this expansion, the bill will make "developmental therapy" a billable Medicaid service, allowing the ILP to leverage those funds.

Expansion of eligibility will show a substantial cost savings over the course of a child's education. According to national data, 46% of children who receive early intervention services meet developmental age expectations by age 3 and do not require special education when they enter Kindergarten. Each of those children represents a potential savings of \$229,071 over the course of their public education, when comparing the cost of 3 years of early intervention with 13 years of special education. **With expansion, the projected additional number of children who would not require special education is 152 each school year, representing a potential annual cost savings of \$34,888,837.**

Other benefits of expansion are as follows:

- Reduced need for adult home and community-based Medicaid services.

- Reduced Crime and Victimization: Fewer children entering the Juvenile Justice system = less burden on child protective services, public safety, and corrections.
- Reduced need for special needs daycare: Allow parents to re-enter the workforce while lowering burden on public assistance programs.
- Increase future workforce: More high school graduates ready to enter post-secondary or vocational programs or to enter the workforce directly and contribute positively to society.

The Council urges you to support ILP program expansion by passing SB 178.

Sincerely,



Jena Crafton  
GCDSE Chairperson



Caitlin Poindexter  
GCDSE Legislative Committee Chairperson

**From:** [Sen. Donny Olson](#)  
**To:** [Liz Harpold](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Support Alaska Infants Learning Program  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 18, 2026 2:52:21 PM  
**Attachments:** [Outlook-zkej4elp.png](#)

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**From:** Amy Simpson <[asimpson@picak.org](mailto:asimpson@picak.org)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 18, 2026 1:33 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee <[Finance.Committee@akleg.gov](mailto:Finance.Committee@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Support Alaska Infants Learning Program

Amy Simpson, Executive Director  
Programs for Infants and Children

RE: Alaska Infant Learning Program

I am writing in support of SB178 to expand Alaska's Infant Learning Program (ILP). I serve as Executive Director of Programs for Infants and Children (PIC), which provides services to children and families in Anchorage, Girdwood, Whittier, and communities across the Lake and Peninsula region.

Each year, PIC receives between 900 and 1,000 referrals from physicians, parents, childcare providers, hospitals, and other community partners. Our responsibility is to evaluate whether children are experiencing developmental delays or disabilities, determine eligibility, and provide early intervention services to support their development. These services are mandated under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which requires that all eligible children are served without waitlists.

Over the past 12 years, flat funding has not reduced the number of children served, but it has significantly impacted service delivery. Programs have been forced to operate with fewer providers due to rising costs, resulting in children receiving services less frequently than in prior years.

To restore service levels, we estimate that \$2.7 million increment is needed to address inflation and years of flat funding. An additional \$3.02 million increment would support expanded eligibility, accommodating an estimated 77% increase in children qualifying at a 25% delay threshold.

National data demonstrate that early intervention is a cost-effective investment. The National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study found that 46% of children who receive early intervention services do not require special education beyond kindergarten. Based on these findings, we estimate potential annual savings of \$34.9 million in future special education costs.

The fiscal note associated with this bill addresses the resources needed by the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, including staffing and Medicaid match. However, it does not include the

necessary funding for grantees to deliver these services. Both components are essential to ensure successful implementation.

Without this investment, too many children will continue to miss critical early supports, increasing the likelihood of challenges in school and beyond. Expanding ILP is a strategic investment that will improve outcomes for children, strengthen families, and reduce long-term costs for the state.

Amy Simpson, Executive Director  
Programs for Infants and Children

*Amy Simpson*

Executive Director  
Programs for Infants and Children  
907-550-3024





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

## Ella Lubin

---

**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**

---

**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

---

**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

---

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.

--

Chelsea Burke



## Doniece Gott

---

**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**

---

**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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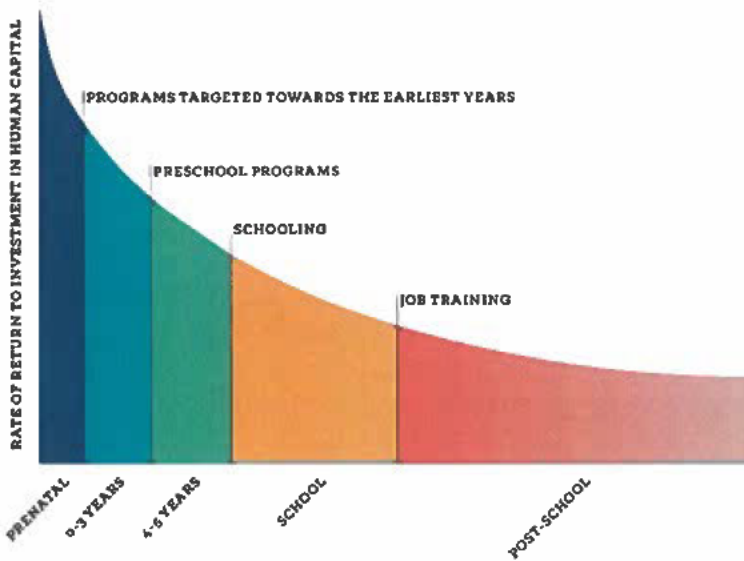
**Doniece Gott**

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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]  
[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.

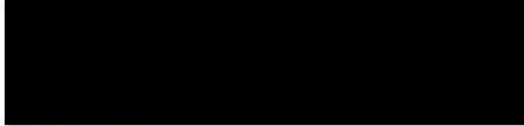
Expanding eligibility through SB178 is not only the right thing to do for families — it is a smart investment in Alaska's future. No family should miss out on life-changing early intervention services because they fall just outside current eligibility criteria.

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.

--

**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.



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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!

--

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.

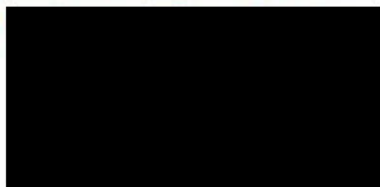
Please pass Senate Bill 178 for our kids and families.

Thank you,

Carrie Nash, Fairbanks

--

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

--

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]

--

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

**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.

--

Chelsea Burke

[chelseaburke907@gmail.com](mailto:chelseaburke907@gmail.com)

907.799.3188

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Sharon Franklin <sfranklin@alaskacenter.org>  
**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 <caelzey@alaskacenter.org>  
**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**

Cell: (907) 888-2585 (call or text)

Fax: (907) 456-6124

1020 Barnette St., Fairbanks AK 99701

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

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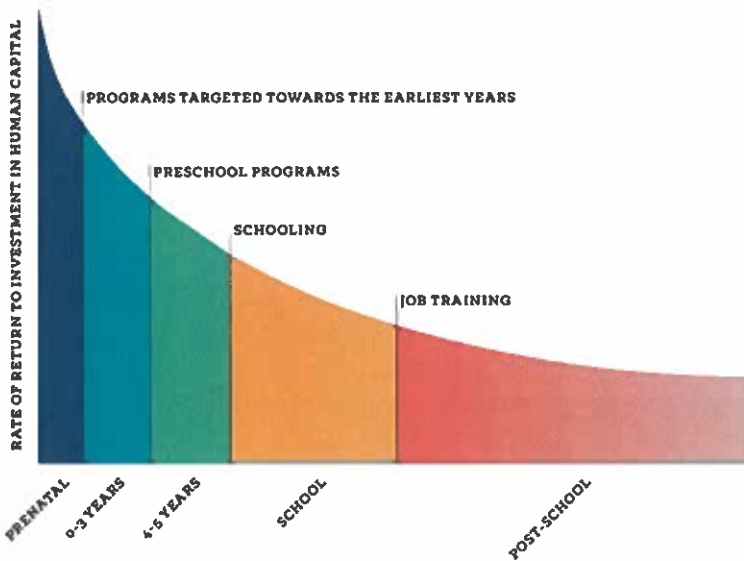
**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Jessica Mills Clark <Jessica.Clark@comconnections.org>  
**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  
(907) 225-7825  
(907) 225-1541 (fax)  
[Jessica.Clark@comconnections.org](mailto:Jessica.Clark@comconnections.org)

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Michele Girault <mgirault@hopealaska.org>  
**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 <tesia.meade@gmail.com>  
**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 <lalalaska11@gmail.com>  
**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 <cheryl.welcome@mssca.org>  
**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:** krisbrooks@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Kristin Bradshaw  
<krisbrooks@everyactioncustom.com>  
**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  
178 Carlyle Way Fairbanks, AK 99709-2930 krisbrooks@hotmail.com  
(907) 378-1545

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** D. McGinnis, DNP, APRN, FNP-C <mcginnisfnp@gmail.com>  
**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 <mary@linksprc.org>  
**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.

--

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

[mary@linksprc.org](mailto:mary@linksprc.org)

**Office: 907-373-3632 Ext.635**

**Cell: 907-671-3070**

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

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



## Doniece Gott

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**From:** stephen.morse30@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Stephen Morse  
<stephen.morse30@everyactioncustom.com>  
**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  
314 Tilson St Sitka, AK 99835-7131  
stephen.morse30@gmail.com  
(907) 738-1664

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Santanna Sumauang <ssumauang@cfc.org>  
**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  
700 Katlian St Ste B  
907-331.0236 (phone)  
907-752-0629 (cell)  
907-276-6961 (fax)

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Suriyani Raip <sraip@ifhs.org>  
**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.

PO Box 144, Unalaska, AK 99685

P: (907) 581-8697 | Fax: (907) 581-2332

[sraip@ifhs.org](mailto:sraip@ifhs.org)

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## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Erika Apathy <erika.apathy1@gmail.com>  
**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!

--

Erika Apathy  
Bachelor's of Arts in Elementary Education  
Master's in Educational Technology  
[Erika.apathy1@gmail.com](mailto:erika.apathy1@gmail.com)  
907-738-7888

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Lydia Nelson <lydiannelson5.21@yahoo.com>  
**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 <nash.carrie@gmail.com>  
**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  
[nash.carrie@gmail.com](mailto:nash.carrie@gmail.com)

907 388 5018 cell

740 Pelican Way  
Fairbanks, AK 99709

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Angie Gingue <AGingue@alaskacenter.org>  
**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**  
1020 Barnette St., Fairbanks AK 99701 Phone: (907) 456-  
4003 x123 Cell: (907) 328-8748 (call or text)  
[www.alaskacenter.org](http://www.alaskacenter.org)

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## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Brittni Haan <[brittni.haan@maniilaq.org](mailto:brittni.haan@maniilaq.org)>  
**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  
P: 907-442-7884  
[brittni.haan@maniilaq.org](mailto:brittni.haan@maniilaq.org)

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Lauren Wild <lauren.a.wild@gmail.com>  
**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

--

Lauren Wild, PhD

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

Sitka, Alaska  
907-738-5315 (cell)

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Fontana Dawson <FDawson@alaskacenter.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2026 8:42 AM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** † 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 <gage.rita@gmail.com>  
**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  
[gage.rita@gmail.com](mailto:gage.rita@gmail.com)

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Marlene or John Wenger <marwen@cvinet.net>  
**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 Norrissa

Mother of Miss Wyatt

Mother of Miss Henry

Ketchikan, Alaska



Photo of Charlie (Baby Chuck) Norrissa

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** alinakrol@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Alina Krol  
<alinakrol@everyactioncustom.com>  
**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  
1340 Skyline Dr Fairbanks, AK 99712-1150 alinakrol@gmail.com  
(907) 371-8247

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Barbara Morse <barbaramorse2018@gmail.com>  
**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  
314 Tilson Street  
Sister Alaska 99835

## Doniece Gott

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**From:** Kathe Baker <kathewb@gmail.com>  
**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  
907-388-4992  
[kathewb@gmail.com](mailto:kathewb@gmail.com)

**Doniece Gott**

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**From:** Lawrence Baker <lawrencejbaker@gmail.com>  
**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

907-388-7365

[lawrencejbaker@gmail.com](mailto:lawrencejbaker@gmail.com)

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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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