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March 11, 2014

Alaska Senate Finance Committee

RE: Letter of Support for the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP)

Senator Kelly, Co-Chair

Senator Fairclough, Vice-Chair

Senator Dunleavy, Member

Senator Olson, Member

Senator Meyer, Co-Chair

Senator Bishop, Member

Senator Hoffman, Member

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The Alaska Humanities Forum's New to Alaska Teachers (C3) Project aims to increase teacher retention and positively impact student achievement in rural remote Alaska. The project is a partnership between school districts, native organizations, and the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP). This collaboration includes a model where ASMP mentors of partner districts participate in a cultural immersion alongside their new to Alaska early career teachers prior to the start of the school year. Mentors then continue their relationship with teachers over a two-year period.

C3 Teachers overwhelmingly cite their ASMP mentor relationship as the primary reason they remain a teacher in rural remote Alaska. Below are two testimonials representative of the input the Forum is receiving from project participants.

Testimonial #1

"I found myself overwhelmed with the unusual expectations placed upon educators in bush Alaska. At the beginning of the semester, I was coaching volleyball and a formal observation was going to take place at some point during the day. The simple act of making copies while I wrote the agenda on the board saved me from having a massive panic attack and quitting on the spot. Through many conversations over dinner and lesson planning, he has opened my eyes to the work we are doing and the successes that create the biggest impact on the students. This advice, as well as the relationships I've built through the C3 Project, have impacted my decision to make this place I call home, if not forever, at least for the upcoming school year."

To use the Humanities to tell the stories and impact the lives of all Alaskans.

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Testimonial #2

"Both of my mentors have been instrumental in my decision to stay in the bush. My first mentor was very supportive in my decision to stay on last year, when I was in an environment that was experiencing high turnover and was not as supportive. This year's mentor acted as an advocate and stepped in to support me, which ultimately helped me make my decision to return this year as well."

Honorable members of the finance committee, the Alaska Humanities Forum encourages the legislature to continue to support the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, as it continues to positively impact teacher retention and student achievement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nina Kemppel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Nina" on the left and "Kemppel" on the right.

Nina Kemppel
President & CEO
Alaska Humanities Forum

CC: Dana Thomas, Ph.D., Vice President, Academic Affairs, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Susan McCauley, Ph.D., Director, Division of Teaching & Learning Support, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

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