

February 24, 2012

Dear Senator Hollis French,

I am writing this letter in support of SB 120, which will expand support and resources for the Parents as Teachers home visiting program. This legislation makes it possible for parents and families to receive the necessary supports needed to ensure their child's healthy development. Home visiting programs and support for families with young children addresses a critical need throughout Alaska.

As the Child Care Resource and Referral Network in Alaska, thread works to strengthen early care and education. Specifically, we work with parents to assist them in finding early care and education programs; we provide training to early care and education professionals to help prepare them for their work with children; and we work with the community to develop resources for the industry. This work enables us to keep a pulse on the needs and issues families are facing. Over the past several years we have seen an increase in families' struggling to meet basic needs for their family including necessary resources to support their child's healthy development. Senate Bill 120 would be a positive step toward meeting the needs of young children and ensuring that Alaska's families can find and access the services they need.

Several studies have demonstrated the long-term implications to high quality early learning, including home visiting programming. Specifically, research shows that parental involvement in their child's learning is linked to the development of the child's academic skills, including reading and writing. Investment in early childhood and family supports is critical as we now know through brain development research that brain development that occurs in the first six years of life, especially between birth and three years of age, is the most extensive and the most important that occurs in our lifetime. This time in life is when the brain is being developed and hardwired for future learning.

thread supports parents as their child's first and most important teacher. We know parents are the most influential people in their children's lives and that is why we support Senate Bill 120 and investments in Parents as Teachers. If we want to develop a healthy and productive society in our state, we must support parents of young children and invest in them. It is without reservation that I recommend the adoption of Senate Bill 120. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions or if you would like additional comments. Thank you for considering this important legislation that will help support families and children throughout Alaska.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Berglund, MSW

CEO of thread, Alaska's Child Care Resource and Referral Network

907-265-3101

sberglund@threadalaska.org