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To lead, facilitate, and support the efforts of those working in the Early Care and Education profession throughout Alaska.

February 15, 2012

Senator French
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau AK 99801

Greetings,

This letter is to inform the legislative body of the widespread support across the state to establish a voluntary Parents As Teachers home visiting program for families with children ages birth to kindergarten entry. Our membership represents nearly a thousand early childhood educators across the state, devoted to increasing the quality of early learning experiences for young children in order to prepare them for success in school and life.

Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. Voluntary family visiting programs provide the information, support, and encouragement parents need to increase their knowledge of child development, promote early literacy experiences, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and increase children's school readiness and school success. Through these preventative programs, future costs such as special education and remedial education, have been shown to be reduced.

- In Alaska, 40% of children entering kindergarten are not ready for school. Children who begin school behind rarely catch up and are less likely to graduate from high school, attend college, or acquire the skills necessary to obtain a job that pays a living wage.
- Alaska's graduation rate according to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is around 60%. The lack of school readiness at kindergarten leads to low graduation rates.
- Families involved with home visitation programs such as Parents as Teachers are more involved in their children's later school experiences, leading to more positive outcomes for their children's education.

Establishment of such programs is an investment in the young children of Alaska and their families, with positive outcomes for years to come.

Gara Bridwell, M.A.
Alaska AEYC Public Policy Chair