

March 2015

Representative Wes Keller
State Capitol Room #403
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Keller,


My name is Dr. David Hjellen and I am a child psychiatrist for, and work with patients residing in North Star Behavioral Health System. The purpose of this correspondence is to request your support for Education Funding Equality for Children with Mental Illness HB102. This legislation will assist many children to receive an adequate and equitable education while receiving the mental health treatment they require. Too often I see my families struggle, deciding between the needed treatment for the health and wellbeing of their child and the education they know will be lost during that treatment. A free appropriate education is the right of every child and ensuring this at-risk population can move forward with their peers and be successful is an important part of that right. No child should be penalized educationally for getting the help they need to stay healthy.

I wish to go on record for supporting this legislation as it will:

- Increase the educational opportunities and measurable outcomes for children with mental illness so that they can successfully transition back to their traditional school after receiving intensive and sometimes lifesaving mental health treatment
- Require school districts to send a portion of funding that would normally be a part of the funding formula for the school days the child is in attendance
- Allow the licensed facility to deliver appropriate educational and related services provided by licensed teachers and credentialed service providers to the student while the student is admitted to the facility
- Allow for a more comprehensive continuum of care by individualizing each student's academic plan to complement their therapeutic treatment goals
- Provide the state real time data that will assist the state with meeting the needs of other special populations such as students residing in rural villages
- Increase the length of time students spend in school learning and track measurable outcomes to be reviewed by state stakeholders

I ask you to support HB102 as it will improve the delivery of educational services to the children with severe mental illness and allow them the same educational opportunities as their peers.

Respectfully Yours,


Cc: Representative Lora Reinbold, Representative Jim Colver, Representative Paul Seaton,
Representative Liz Vazquez, Representative Harriet Drummond, Representative Jonathan Kriess-
Tomkins