

**From:** [Julie Walker](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Girls on the Run funding  
**Date:** Monday, March 30, 2015 10:39:43 AM

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**From:** **Melissa E. Rielly** <[mrielly@valleymedicalcare.com](mailto:mrielly@valleymedicalcare.com)>  
**Date:** Mon, Mar 30, 2015 at 7:26 AM  
**Subject:** Girls on the Run funding  
**To:** "[finance.committee@alaska.gov](mailto:finance.committee@alaska.gov)" <[finance.committee@alaska.gov](mailto:finance.committee@alaska.gov)>  
**Cc:** "[juliew@awareak.org](mailto:juliew@awareak.org)" <[juliew@awareak.org](mailto:juliew@awareak.org)>

Good morning members of the Finance Committee,

I am writing in continued support of the Girls on the Run program, ran locally by AWARE, Inc. This is the second year that my daughter Keeley has participated in this outstanding program, first at Riverbend Elementary School and currently at Mendenhall River Community School here in Juneau. As a parent, I cannot say enough great things about this program. Besides encouraging girls from third grade and up to be involved in the healthy activity of training for a 5K running race, it focuses each session on an aspect of helping girls build their self-esteem, while fostering a sense of community amongst the girls and their coaches, all of whom volunteer their time for this awesome program. I have seen at both schools that the volunteer coaches have been incredible women, from all walks of life, who believe is GOTR so much that they are willing to give three hours a week in support of the girls in our community.

I know that each of the members of the Finance Committee has heard about the need for our girls are in need of programs such as GOTR to help them develop such strong self-esteem and this sense of community in order to help them navigate their adolescent and teenage years and survive as unscathed as possible. In Alaska, with our high rates of depression, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, and suicide, this program is especially important. If we don't set our daughters/nieces/friends up to be able to withstand peer pressure and the negative experiences they may have in their day-to-day life, we as a society will see the ramifications now, as well as in the future. This program through the weekly self-esteem building exercises and the physical fitness goals the girls get from the program helps each girl find her unique and powerful voice, while ensuring they have the tools to withstand whatever negative things they may be confronted with.

Last year, I had the pleasure of meeting the founder of Girls on the Run, as she came to Juneau and ran the end-of-session 5K with all the girls, who were local and from all around Southeast Alaska. As I ran with my daughter (as each girl has a running partner), the experience was incredible and still makes me swell up with pride at all the girls accomplishments. From the

founder on down to each individual girl, you could see the positive impact that GOTR made. You can see that each schools GOTR team have formed strong bonds, often times amongst girls who may not otherwise have become friends. Now they have each other's back and support. I implore you to maintain the funding for this program that has so many positive benefits for the girls and women involved, as well as the communities that the program is ran in.

Thank you for your time and if you have any additional questions, I can be reached at [\(907\) 957-6535](tel:907-957-6535).

Sincerely,

Melissa Rielly

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Julie Walker  
Girls On The Run Coordinator  
AWARE, Inc.  
[907-586-4092](tel:907-586-4092)