

From: [Fallon, Mollie K.](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#); [Sen. Pete Kelly](#); [Sen. Anna MacKinnon](#); [Sen. Peter Micciche](#); [Sen. Click Bishop](#); [Sen. Mike Dunleavy](#); [Sen. Lyman Hoffman](#); [Sen. Donny Olson](#)
Subject: Best Beginnings
Date: Tuesday, March 31, 2015 9:45:14 AM

Good Morning Senators --

As a school psychologist specializing in providing early childhood services, I am well aware that the first years in a child's life are a critical developmental period and that early intervention and support can be incredibly beneficial in preparing children for success throughout life. Parents are their child's first teacher and developing an accessible network of support helps to ensure that parents are able to do their best for their families. As an education professional in Alaska, and a soon-to-be parent in the Fairbanks community, I feel strongly that early development, family support, and school readiness should be considered high priorities in our state.

Best Beginnings Partnership funds have been used in our community to promote kindergarten readiness, family support, and community engagement, educating parents as to why early learning is so important and that it starts at birth. This year alone funds have been used for health screening and education (the Family Health Fair), opportunities for young children to be healthy and active (activity scholarships and play group support), early literacy (events for families and training for child care providers), and groundwork toward establishing a Parents as Teachers program open to all families of the community.

Best Beginnings dollars are leveraged with cash, primarily from local businesses, and in-kind contributions such as professional services and volunteer time. At the end of December, the local match had already reached 79% of grant funds. (local match \$41,822; grant funds \$52,500). Around the state, dollars that Best Beginnings receives from DEED are used to support early literacy and enable communities to provide health outreach and education to all families, support play spaces, encourage family-friendly business practices, promote kindergarten readiness programs, elevate the conversation as to why early intervention is so important, and educate the public that learning starts from birth.

Students in our state come to school with complex and diverse learning and developmental needs that can create barriers to school success. Family issues, poverty, stress, grief and loss, domestic and community violence, substance abuse, and mental health problems can impact even the youngest family members and have a lasting impact. Early intervention and exposure to learning through programs like Best Beginnings can provide benefits to children at home, at school, and in life. These funds help families across the state lay the foundation to help ensure successful outcomes for all of Alaska's children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mollie

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"The most important part of vehicle maintenance is clean windows - so if you are broken down, you can still enjoy the beauty of the view." -- Dan Eldon