

From: [June Sobocinski](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Written testimony regarding cuts to education
Date: Tuesday, March 31, 2015 3:23:16 PM

Dear Alaska Legislators,

The United Way of Anchorage works shoulder to shoulder every day with community agencies and education organizations to improve outcomes for children in Anchorage. As a founding member of the 90% by 2020 Partnership, our work is to align community effort and resources to improve academic results for Anchorage children, from the youngest to the oldest. We see the state as a partner, and we are sensitive to the fact this is a challenging economic time during which the state operating budget must be reduced. But our position is that education is one of a handful of areas that should be held harmless to the greatest extent possible.

The Governor's budget kept programs we believe are critical. In particular, pre-k and related early childhood programs, such as Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and Head Start, are key ingredients to student success. We believe that abandoning these programs would cause poorer student achievement, lower graduation rates, deplete the workforce of local talent, and depress communities both socially and economically.

Both the House of Representatives and Senate budget subcommittee have recommended eliminating state funding for many early childhood and preschool programs. It appears that the idea has been to eliminate most of those things not constitutionally required.

The wrench in that thinking is that the research that has been done in the years since the writing of Alaska's constitution has overwhelmingly shown that the first 5 years of life do more to set a life course trajectory than anything that happens after. That is why we support holding education harmless to the greatest extent possible, and in particular we ask that the state continue to invest in early childhood learning. There is no infrastructure more important than our people. While we face a severe fiscal challenge that is daunting, we can't respond by unhinging our state's hope and aspirations, which rest squarely with our children.

Respectfully,

June Sobocinski

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