

From: [Nome Preschool](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Pre-K Grant
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“Committee Chair, Members of the committee, for the record my name is Jiorgia Clark, representing Nome Preschool Association. I am writing regarding the Pre-K Grant which is slated to be eliminated from the Department of Education & Early Development Budget for fiscal year 2016 and want to make the following points:

Nome Preschool has been included in the Pre-K Grant for many years. The Pre-K grant is on the list of items to be cut from the budget for fiscal year 2016 for the Department of Education and Early Development.

I am sure you have reviewed data showing that students who leave preschool classrooms included in the Pre-K Grant outperform most children who have no preschool experience at all. I won't include our specific data regarding the students from Nome Preschool because it has been an intricate part of the checks and balances written into the grant each year of our participation. I will share with you that the Pre-K Grant fills a void that is impossible to replicate.

The most notable component of the grant is a certified teacher, hired by Nome Public Schools and funded by the Pre-K Grant, teaching the students at Nome Preschool. Nome Preschool is a small local institution which has served the young learners of Nome for nearly 45 years. As a small independent educational entity, Nome Preschool does not have the financial capacity to employ a certified teacher at a justifiable rate of pay. In fact, prior to the grant the job of teaching children and running the preschool business was the act of one employee who tirelessly managed all elements of the keeping the preschool functioning from planning and executing lessons to thawing frozen pipes in the dead of winter all for a very uncompetitive salary. Our current budget is partially supported by tuition, but relies heavily on donations and fundraising just to keep the doors open. The Nome Preschool simply cannot afford to replicate what the grant provides. What we are left with is an inferior model that breeds burn-out and inconsistency, two things that keep the preschool from meeting its inherent objective of readying students for kindergarten and beyond.

The Pre-K Grant frees the preschool teacher to focus singularly on the needs of her developing students separate from the business of running the preschool. Because the Pre-K Grant requires the teacher to be certified, this person is someone pedagogically prepared for the task, not just a person who feels they like working with small children. Having a person who is specifically trained to oversee the educational experience is an unparalleled advantage.

To remove the grant sends Nome Preschool back to era where the teacher is negotiating two worlds - academic and business. Having to manage all aspects of the preschool invariably limits the instructor's ability to attend to and nurture the academic progress of his/her students with the same attention. The outcome would most certainly be a less effective preschool climate sending children a little less prepared to kindergarten in the future. Over the long term Nome slips back into a pattern of failure notorious in rural Alaskan communities.

To winnow this grant to the threshing floor erodes what the State of Alaska has asked K-12 schools to accomplish - proficiency. Stripping a valuable asset like a certified teacher will

have negative repercussions for teachers and administrators in our local school system who are left to make up the difference in the years ahead.

Nome has begun to set a standard in rural Alaska for academic rigor. It is outpacing other hub communities which, I believe, starts with its attention to early education. I ask that each of you think of the 35 children of Nome Preschool who are growing and learning under the direction of Ms. Aisha Talburt, their certified teacher provided through the grant, and reconsider your choice to eliminate the Pre-K Grant. The 35 children currently under her care WILL arrive at kindergarten prepared to meet the demands set before them. I cannot say the same for the children who follow if, indeed, the grant is cut.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

Jiorgia Clark

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