

Good morning,

My name is Elizabeth Moreau Nicolai. I live in south Anchorage and am represented by Senator Holland. I am the mother of two young children (ages 3 and 6) and a children's librarian though my testimony is my own and not that of my employer.

I do not know if I will be able to call in tomorrow for public testimony and wanted to submit written testimony on senate bills 8 and 42 regarding pre-K funding and early reading programs. The vast majority of the work needed for a child to learn to read happens before they reach the Kindergarten classroom. I have dedicated a significant portion of my career to studying early literacy principles and helping to teach those to parents, caregivers, and professionals who work with young children. Quite frankly, five years old is too late to start. Currently Alaska has the lowest reading scores in the nation in our elementary school students. We desperately need to reverse these trends for the sake of our children and our future. Businesses will not invest in Alaska without a qualified workforce and good schools. No one wants to move to a state with terrible schools. And people will move away from here for better for their families.

Pre-Kindergarten programs are cheap in comparison to the costs of remedial reading programs at the high school level or housing inmates in prison. (And yes we do know that third grade reading scores directly relate to the chance of being in prison as an adult).

As an educator and as a parent, I urge you to vote yes on these two bills.

Thank you,  
Elizabeth Moreau Nicolai