

**To: Senator Holland and members of Alaska Senate Education Committee
Regarding: Senate Bill 10**

Dear Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

This letter is in support of Senate Bill 10, to provide tuition for essential workers to attend the University of Alaska. In particular, this letter addresses the potential impact to individuals working in licensed child care.

Child care providers have stepped up as heroes during the Covid-19 pandemic this past year to keep Alaskan children safe, healthy, and learning. They have endured additional stress and personal risk to enable parents to maintain employment in essential roles in the medical, public safety, transportation, and other sectors to keep communities functioning.

Social distancing is not possible with toddlers and preschoolers - working with young children demands close contact throughout the day. Many child care workers with health conditions were unable to continue their work, but the majority continued to show up for children every day due to a deep commitment and responsibility to children and families. Very few have health insurance provided by their employer, and few received hazard pay. In addition to the low wages— an average wage of only \$11 per hour, early childhood educators working in child care settings do not receive the public recognition and respect they deserve.

The recognition provided by passage of Senate Bill 10 would send a wave of encouragement to all licensed child care providers, and provide them an opportunity to advance in their career and earn higher wages. For example, an entry level child care provider could continue to work part time, and take 6 credits for two semesters to achieve 12 credits and qualify as a child care administrator. They could then continue up the career ladder with the Alaska SEED (System for Early Education Development) housed by **thread** Alaska and earn much higher wages,.

Of the over 4,500 individuals working in licensed child care programs in Alaska, even if only a small percentage participate in the grant program , it would have a large impact on the need for a qualified workforce in early childhood education. Programs across the state are struggling to maintain qualified teaching staff in order to keep their doors open and rebuild enrollment.

Thank you for considering this bill to recognize essential workers by providing them an opportunity for advancement

Members of the Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group

AEYC Affiliates of Alaska: Margaret Bauer, Joy Lyon, AnnMarie Mattacchione

Alaska Head Start Association: Mark Lackey

Alaska Infant Learning Association: Brynn Bolling

All Alaska Pediatric Partnership: Tamar Ben-Yosef

Best Beginnings: Abbe Hensley

Parents As Teachers State Affiliate, Lisa Danielson

thread Alaska, Stephanie Berglund

And the Alaska Children's Trust: Trevor Storrs



The Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group is a coalition of early childhood experts and leading organizations with representation across Alaska working to increase the number of children ready to succeed in school and beyond.