



March 4, 2024

Alaska State Legislature  
Alaska State Capitol  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 89 (Coulombe) - SUPPORT

Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

On behalf of the American Heart Association, we are pleased to support HB 89. Alaska is facing a childcare crisis, in part due to low wages, labor shortages, and a declining number of child care providers. This important legislation will help address that by increasing access to affordable and quality childcare.

HB 89 strengthens the childcare system in several ways:


- Expands the number of families who can afford child care by increasing family assistance eligibility from 85% State Median Income (SMI) to 105% of the SMI.
- Aligns the assistance level to reflect the actual cost of care.
- Develops a sliding fee scale for child care grants.
- Provides grants for the highest performing and highest quality child care facilities for working families and strengthening the Child Care Assistance program.
- Makes child care expenditures and cash or equipment accepted by child care facilities and payments to employees for the purpose of offsetting child care costs eligible for tax credits.

Access to affordable, high quality child care and education during the early stages of a child's life is critical not only from an economic perspective but health perspective. Research by James Heckman reported that high-quality birth-to-five programs can deliver a 13 percent return on investment annually. In addition, high-quality birth-to-five programs can lead to better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment as an adult. <sup>i</sup>

Increasing access to quality child care reflects our collective goal to ensure families have the support they need to for quality child care for their children and that providers are adequately reimbursed at rates that reflect the actual cost of care.

It is for these reasons the American Heart Association is pleased to support HB 89 and respectfully requests your support.

Sincerely,



Jamie Morgan

Sr. Region Lead, Government Relations

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<sup>i</sup> Heckman JJ; The Heckman Equation Project. Research Summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program. 2016.  
[https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2017/01/F\\_Heckman\\_CBAOnePager\\_120516.pdf](https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2017/01/F_Heckman_CBAOnePager_120516.pdf).