

AMENDMENT #5

Offered in: House
To: HCSCSSB53(FIN)

By: Representative Gara

Agency:

Department of Education and Early Development

Insert at Page 89, line 30
"Project:

Head Start Grants, HD 1-40

Amount:

\$630,000

Funding Source:

General Fund ''

Explanation:

This amendment will provide additional general funds to the grants line of the Head Start program. State Head Start funding has remained flat for many years, and the current budget proposes flat state funding again. In real terms, that constitutes a funding reduction. An increment of just over \$665,000 would be needed to keep the Head Start program in line with the rate of inflation.

National studies show that children who participate in quality preschools are more likely to graduate from high school than other children, are less likely to need expensive special education or remedial services, and are more likely to attend college and be employed later in life.

Alaska has no statewide early education program, and Head Start has been struggling to meet growing demand with flat or decreased funding. Since 2003, the Head Start program has been forced to eliminate services to 361 children, close services in 6 communities, reduce classroom hours, change program options, scale back transportation services, freeze staff wages, defer on-going maintenance and repairs to facilities, and rely more heavily on in kind donations from the communities for the provision of some essential services. The proposed increment would help keep this proven successful program in place until a statewide pre-school program can be implemented.